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November 1993 State Elections

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CONTENTS

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NOTICE TO READERS: An • indicates material not disseminated in electronic form.

ELECTION STRATEGIES, POSSIBILITIES VIEWED

Critical to Nation's Future

• Rao Government Forecast To Fall After Election Results *[Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH 13 Aug]* 1
• Stalemate Foreseen in Assembly Elections *[THE TELEGRAPH 27 Sep]* 2
• Congress Defeat Feared, Seen Threat to National Security *[THE HINDU 29 Sep]* 3
• Elections in Hindi Heartland Seen Critical to Nation's Future *[INDIA TODAY 30 Sep]* 4
• Assembly Elections Said to Decide Who Will Rule Nation *[THE TELEGRAPH 1 Oct]* 7
• Review of Election Prospects for Different Political Parties *[ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA 2 Oct]* 8
• Prospects of BJP, Congress (I), Janata Dal Analyzed *[AJ 6 Oct]* 10
• Battle in Hindi Heartland Seen Battle for National Power *[THE TIMES OF INDIA 8 Oct]* 12
• Elections Analyzed State by State *[AJ 10 Oct]* 13
• Hindi Belt Elections Seen 'Decisive,' 'Critical' *[INDIA TODAY 15 Oct]* 14
• Congress (I) Survey Said to Forecast BJP Victory *[JANSATTA 15 Oct]* 17
• Elections' Significance as Seen by Party Leaders Presented *[JANSATTA 24 Oct]* 18
• Analyst Sees No Surge Towards One Party Victory *[JANSATTA 24 Oct]* 20
• Mood of Electorate Gaged, Scenario Seen Unclear *[INDIA TODAY 31 Oct]* 21

BJP-Congress (I) Showdown

• BJP Said Benefitting From Renewed Anti-Congress Sentiment *[THE TELEGRAPH 12 Aug]* 24
• Congress, BJP Battle Termed 'Do-or-Die' Struggle *[THE WEEK 5 Sep]* 25
• BJP Challenge to Congress (I) Viewed 26
  • Rao Providing Ammunition *[AJ 6 Sep]* 26
• BJP Seeks Poll Debate With Congress on Basic Issues *[DECCAM HERALD 22 Sep]* 27
• Congress Said Unable to Capitalize on BJP Downswing *[THE TELEGRAPH 8 Oct]* 28
• Close Contests Foreseen in Rajasthan, Himachal, Madhya *[INDIA TODAY 15 Oct]* 28

Congress (I)

• Poor Showing in State Elections Foreseen for Congress (I) 33
  • Helpless in Uttar Pradesh *[INDIA TODAY 31 Jul]* 33
  • Hindu Wave in Madhya Pradesh *[INDIA TODAY 31 Jul]* 34
  • Squabbling in Rajasthan *[INDIA TODAY 31 Jul]* 34
  • Poor Campaign in Himachal Pradesh *[INDIA TODAY 31 Jul]* 35
  • Analyst Sees Poor Showing *[INDIA TODAY 31 Jul]* 35
• Congress Seen Helpless, Engaging in 'Constitutional Subterfuge' *[THE STATESMAN 26 Aug]* .. 36
• Congress Mounting Hi-Tech Campaigning in BJP States *[INDIAN EXPRESS 18 Sep]* 36
• Lack of Local Leadership Seen Costing Congress (I) Dearly *[THE TELEGRAPH 29 Sep]* 37
• Congress Advised to 'Prepare Own Epitaph' *[THE STATESMAN 5 Oct]* 39

BJP

• BJP Challenge for National Power Seen Very Serious *[SUNDAY 3 Jul]* 39
• BJP Seen Seizing the Anti-Corruption Issue *[SUNDAY 10 Jul]* 41
• BJP Said to Have Market on Mandir, Mandal Issues *[JANSATTA 10 Jul]* 42
• Advani Interviewed on Secularism, Communalism *[SUNDAY 4 Sep]* 43
• BJP Said Identifying Election Theme *[JANSATTA 5 Sep]* 46
• BJP Said Inspiring Fear in Election Opponents *[AJ 8 Sept]* 47

* Advani: Results Will Precipitate Lok Sabha Elections *[INDIAN EXPRESS 18 Sep]* 49
* BJP Plans To Use High Technology Campaign Strategy *[TIMES OF INDIA 19 Sep]* 50
* BJP Promises Sales Tax Abolition if Elected *[THE TIMES OF INDIA 24 Sep]* 50
* BJP Sweep of Elections Forecast *[ORGANISER 3 Oct]* 51
* Advani Interviewed on BJP Policy, Prospects *[THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA 3 Oct]* 52
* Vajpayee Profiled, Role Seen Important *[THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA 3 Oct]* ... 54
* CBI Charges Against BJP Leaders Seen Benefitting Party *[THE TELEGRAPH 7 Oct]* 55
* CBI Charges Improve BJP Position *[ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA 9 Oct]* 55
* BJP Said Facing 'Now or Never' Elections *[THE HINDU 17 Oct]* 57
* Impact of Ayodhya Vote for BJP Analyzed *[THE STATESMAN 17 Oct]* 58
* BJP Said Counting on 'Video Rath' Impact *[THE TIMES OF INDIA 24 Oct]* 59
* BJP Prospects Seen Brightening *[THE TIMES OF INDIA 25 Oct]* 60

Janata Dal

* Janata Dal Attempt to Woo Dalits Viewed *[AJ 12 Jul]* 61
* Janata Dal Factions Continue to Jockey for Position 63
  * Janata Dal (A) Hurting Itself *[JANSATTA 17 Jul]* 63
  * Factionalism Threatens Janata Dal (B) *[JANSATTA 21 Jul]* 64
  * V.P. Singh's Movement *[JANSATTA 26 Jul]* 65
* V.P. Singh Interviewed on Mandal Emphasis *[SUNDAY 11 Sep]* 66
* V.P. Singh Embrace of Mandal, Muslims Seen Backfiring *[SUNDAY 11 Sep]* 67
* Ajit, Mulayam Singh Rivalry Seen Cause of Disunity in Janata *[INDIA TODAY 15 Sep]* 69
* Ajit Singh Backing Janata Dal Unity *[JANSATTA 17 Sep]* 70
* V.P. Singh Renews Mandal Reservation Demands *[AJ 23 Sep]* 70
* Chandra Shekhar Still Hoping For Janata Dal Unity *[JANSATTA 23 Sep]* 71
* Unity of Janata Dal Factions Seen in Doubt *[JANSATTA 25 Sep]* 71
* Driving Forces Behind Janata Reunification Viewed *[AJ 29 Sep]* 72
* Janata Dal Reunification Viewed *[JANSATTA 30 Sep]* 73
* Janata Dal Seen United in Name Only *[JANSATTA 30 Sep]* 74
* Janata Dal Unity Seen Ephemeral, Unlikely to Last *[THE TELEGRAPH 3 Oct]* 75
* Shahi Imam giving Fatwah To Vote For Janata Dal *[AJ 8 Oct]* 77
* Leadership Struggle Seen Continuing Liability for Janata Dal *[JANSATTA 18 Oct]* 77
* United Janata Dal Said 'Infused With Infectious Hope' *[FRONTLINE 22 Oct]* 78
* Ajit Singh Interviewed on Party Unity *[FRONTLINE 22 Oct]* 79
* Ajit Singh Interviewed on Janata Dal Merger, Implications *[THE STATESMAN 24 Oct]* 80
* Janata Dal Strategy Viewed *[FRONTLINE 5 Nov]* 80

Muslim Vote

* Fierce Battle Forecast For Muslim Votes *[JANSATTA 2 Aug]* 81
* Congress (I) Failing Bid for Muslim Votes *[JANSATTA 25 Sep]* 82
* Muslim Imam Said to Give 'Ultimatum' to Janata Factions *[JANSATTA 25 Sep]* 83
* Muslim Efforts to Unite VP, Mulaym Singh Said to Fail *[JANSATTA 27 Sep]* 84
* Muslim Voters Seen Facing Dilemma *[JANSATTA 2 Oct]* 84
* Leanings of Muslim Voters Viewed, Forecast *[AJ 14 Oct]* 85

Other Parties

* Bahujan Samaj Leader Interviewed on Congress, BJP *[THE TELEGRAPH 31 Jul]* 86
* Mulayam Singh Said To Solicit Mafia, Criminal Candidates *[JANSATTA 13 Oct]* 87
* Chandra Shekhar Interviewed on Election Atmospherics *[JANSATTA 16 Oct]* 87
* Shiv Sena Said Contesting 600 Seats *[THE HINDU 18 Oct]* 88

UTTAR PRADESH

Outlook

* Kanshi Ram, Mulayam Singh Said 'Soft' Towards Congress *[SUNDAY 10 Jul]* 90
* Uttar Pradesh: Electoral Adjustments, Pacts Viewed *[DECCAN HERALD 28 Jul]* 91

* Squabbles Arise Amongst 'Secular Front' Leaders in UP *[THE STATESMAN 31 Jul]* 92
* Political Maneuvering in Uttar Pradesh Intensifying *[FRONTLINE 27 Aug]* 92
* Mulayam Singh Seen Only Possibility of Stopping BJP in UP *[THE WEEK 5 Sep]* 95
* Political Maneuvering in Uttar Pradesh Recounted *[AJ 9 Sep]* 96
* Battle in Uttar Pradesh Seen Intensifying *[THE TIMES OF INDIA 5 Oct]* 98
* Janadesh Yatra Said to Demoralize Congress, Janata Dal Factions *[ORGANISER 10 Oct]* 99
* Seat Adjustments Between Mulayam Singh, Janata Dal Possible *[THE STATESMAN 11 Oct]* .. 100
* Muslim Vote Seen Split Between Mulayam, V.P. Singh *[JANSATTA 13 Oct]* 100
* Ayodhya Seen Important Factor in UP Elections *[THE STATESMAN 13 Oct]* 101
* Lack of 'Wave' Amongst Uttar Pradesh Voters Reported *[THE HINDU 15 Oct]* 102
* BSP, SJP Alliance Seen Cracking *[JANSATTA 16 Oct]* 103
* Understanding Between Congress, BSP Seen Possible *[JANSATTA 17 Oct]* 104
* Caste Said Still Major Dividing Factor in UP *[THE TIMES OF INDIA 18 Oct]* 105
* Mulayam Singh Being Held Scapegoat for 'Failure of Secular Alliance' *[THE STATESMAN 18 Oct]* 106
* UP's Mountain Districts Seen Straight Contest Between BJP, Congress *[JANSATTA 18 Oct]* 106
* BSP, Samajwadi Party Bickering Over Seat Distribution *[JANSATTA 21 Oct]* 108
* Mulayam Singh Hints At Possible Coalition With Janata Dal *[THE STATESMAN 24 Oct]* 108
* All Parties Claimed Nervous About Polls in UP *[THE STATESMAN 27 Oct]* 109

BJP

* BJP Forecast To Fall Short of Uttar Pradesh Majority *[THE TELEGRAPH 4 Sep]* 110
* Kalayan Singh Claims 'Janadesh' Will Redefine Election *[AJ 23 Sep]* 110
* BJP Said Benefitting From Divided Opposition in UP *[THE TELEGRAPH 30 Sep]* 111
* BJP Said Ready to Appoint Khurana as Chief Minister in UP *[JANSATTA 7 Oct]* 112

Congress (I)

* UP Congress Leaders Reportedly Angered by Pawar Remarks *[THE TELEGRAPH 13 Jul]* 112
* Congress (I) Failure Forecast in Uttar Pradesh *[AJ 28 Jul]* 113
* Tiwari Interviewed on Congress (I) Prospects in UP *[FRONTLINE 27 Aug]* 114
* Congress Seen Lagging in Uttar Pradesh *[THE TELEGRAPH 2 Oct]* 115
* Tiwari Seen Unable to Push Congress in Uttar Pradesh *[THE TELEGRAPH 5 Oct]* 116
* 'Confusion, Desperation' Said to Characterize Congress in UP *[THE STATESMAN 15 Oct]* 116
* Further Congress Decline Seen in Uttar Pradesh *[THE STATESMAN 24 Oct]* 117

Janata Dal

* Ajit Singh Seen Losing Support of Followers *[THE TELEGRAPH 31 Jul]* 117

BSP

* BSP Condemns Janata Dal, V.P. Singh Politics *[THE TELEGRAPH 20 Sep]* 118
* BSP 'Vote Bank' Seen Challenged in Uttar Pradesh *[JANSATTA 15 Oct]* 119
* Kalyan Singh Said to Face Tough Fight To Regain Seat *[THE TELEGRAPH 21 Oct]* 120

SJP

* Mulayam Singh Seen Cultivating New Image in UP *[THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA 20 Aug]* 120
* Mulayam Yadav Interviewed on 'Secular Opposition Unity' *[Madras FRONTLINE 27 Aug]* 121
* Paper Interviews Samajwadi Party Leader Yadav *[THE HINDU 1 Sep]* 122
* Mulayam Singh Said to Understand How to Combat BJP *[THE TELEGRAPH 12 Sep]* 124
* Mulayam Singh Seen Strong in Uttar Pradesh *[FRONTLINE 24 Sep]* 125
* Mulayam Singh Interviewed on Prospects *[FRONTLINE 24 Sep]* 125
* Mulayam Singh Sees Uttar Pradesh Key to Political Future *[JANSATTA 28 Sep]* 126
* Mulayam Singh Position Seen Strong *[AJ 29 Sep]* 127
* Communists Said Drifting Towards Mulayam Singh in UP *[THE TELEGRAPH 30 Sep]* 128
* Mulayam Singh Praised for Standing Up To Imam's Fatwehs *[THE STATESMAN 10 Oct]* 128
* Mulayam Singh Said Falling Out of Favor With Muslims *[ORGANISER 10 Oct]* 130
* Mulayam Singh Interviewed on Decision to Go It Alone *[FRONTLINE 22 Oct]* 130

MADYA PRADESH

Outlook

* Congress Seen Divided Over Possible Alliance With BSP *[THE STATESMAN 19 Oct]* 132
* Madhya Pradesh Muslims Said to Have 'No Choice' But Congress *[THE TELEGRAPH 21 Oct]* 133

BJP

* Advani Said To Restore Order in BJP's Madhya Pradesh Unit *[THE TELEGRAPH 11 Jul]* 133
* BJP Changing Strategy in Madhya Pradesh *[SUNDAY 4 Sep]* 134
* BJP Said Campaigning for Divided Madhya Pradesh *[JANSATTA 29 Sep]* 135

Congress (I)

* Infighting Said Damaging Congress in Madhya Pradesh *[THE STATESMAN 8 Jul]* 136
* Congress Seeking Harijan, Tribal Vote in Madhya Pradesh *[THE WEEK 5 Sep]* 137
* Congress (I) Going After Backwards' Vote in Madhya Pradesh *[JANSATTA 5 Oct]* 137
* Congress (I) Said Gaining in Madhya Pradesh *[THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA 22 Oct]* 138

RAJASTHAN

Outlook

* Congress, BJP Plagued by Factionalism in Rajasthan *[THE WEEK 5 Sep]* 141
* Rajasthan Polls: Parties Reported Getting Ready *[TIMES OF INDIA 15 Sep]* 142
* BJP Seen Ahead in Rajasthan Preparations *[JANSATTA 6 Oct]* 142

BJP

* BJP Seen Strong in Rajasthan *[JANSATTA 28 Sep]* 143

Congress (I)

* Congress (I) Seen Unprepared for Rajasthan Election *[JANSATTA 10 Sep]* 144
* Congress (I) Said Set to Win Rajasthan *[THE HINDU 3 Oct]* 144
* Congress Said Gaining Ground in Rajasthan *[THE TELEGRAPH 21 Oct]* 146
* 'Rebels' Claimed Hurting Congress in Rajasthan *[THE STATESMAN 26 Oct]* 147

Janata Dal

* Janata Dal Seen Weak in Rajasthan *[JANSATTA 28 Sep]* 147
* Janata Dal Prospects in Rajasthan Seen Brightening *[THE STATESMAN 11 Oct]* 148

DELHI

Outlook

* Delhi Election Said Hard to Call *[JANSATTA 27 Sep]* 149
* BJP, Congress Battle for Delhi Assembly Viewed *[THE TIMES OF INDIA 1 Oct]* 150
* Muslim Backward Caste Votes Seen Crucial in Delhi Elections *[THE TELEGRAPH 6 Oct]* 150

BJP

* Akali Dal Calls for Support of BJP in Elections *[THE TIMES OF INDIA 18 Oct]* 151
* Akali Dal (B) Said Campaigning for BJP in Delhi *[THE STATESMAN 20 Oct]* 152
* Sikh Community Seen Rallying Behind BJP in Delhi *[THE STATESMAN 27 Oct]* 152

Congress (I)

* Delhi (I) Congress Workers Said Shocked Over Election *[JANSATTA 23 Sep]* 153
* Municipal Commissioner Said Scheming for Congress Victory in Delhi *[THE STATESMAN 19 Oct]* 153

Other Parties

* Seat Adjustments Between Janata Dal, CPM in Delhi Said to Fail *[THE STATESMAN 19 Oct]* 154

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Outlook

* Congress, BJP Battle in Himachal Seen Intense *[THE WEEK 5 Sep]* 155
* Effect of Beant Singh's Visit to Himachal Pradesh Viewed *[JANSATTA 14 Oct]* 155
* Local Issues Said To Dominate in Himachal *[THE STATESMAN 19 Oct]* 156
* Election Topics, Trends in Himachal Pradesh Viewed *[JANSATTA 25 Oct]* 156

BJP

* Influential Apply Lobby in Himachal Said Opposing BJP *[THE STATESMAN 21 Oct]* 157

Congress (I)

* Rivalry Said Hurting Congress (I) in Himachal *[THE STATESMAN 21 Oct]* 158

MIZORAM

* President's Rule By January Forecast in Mizoram *[THE WEEK 5 Sep]* 160
* BJP Seen Impacting Northeast, Including Mizoram *[ORGANISER 17 Oct]* 160
* Mizoram Elections Said Capable of Producing Surprises *[JANSATTA 21 Oct]* 161
* Lack of Enthusiasm Seen For Election in Mizoram *[JANSATTA 22 Oct]* 162
* Congress (I) Confident of Win in Mizoram *[THE STATESMAN 24 Oct]* 162
* Attempts at Election Alliances in Mizoram Viewed *[JANSATTA 25 Oct]* 162

OTHER ELECTION REPORTAGE

* Janata Dal Factions Merge in Karnataka, Trend Seen *[SUNDAY 10 Jul]* 164
* Kerala: Congress Faces Tough Times *[Bombay TIMES OF INDIA 15 Sep]* 164
* Bombay: Six Municipal Wards By-Elections Announced *[TIMES OF INDIA 15 Sep]* 165
* Karnataka: Festival May Delay Local Polls *[TIMES OF INDIA 18 Sep]* 165
* BJP Influence in South Said Growing, Alliances Unneeded *[THE HINDU 3 Oct]* 166

Critical to Nation's Future

* Rao Government Forecast To Fall After Election Results

93LA0189D Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 13 Aug 93 p 7

[Article by S. Nihal Singh: "Waiting To Be Poll Axed"]

[Text] The Congress government's enthusiasm for commemorating events of the past has risen in direct proportion to its difficulties. And in a fit of misplaced generosity, the Center declared another holiday, this time on the 51st anniversary of the Quit India movement. This will only encourage the lax work ethic of the country.

Perhaps the Congress needs to hark back to the party's distinguished past to remind the people about its lineage. But doing this will not make the problems of the Prime Minister, Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao, go away. Even after squeaking through the no- confidence motion and acquiring seven new members of parliament, the outlook for the party is far from rosy.

Mr Rao faces two kinds of problems: to maintain a semblance of consensus in the Congress about his continuing relevance to the party as a leader and to get on with the task of governing, with a host of new and old problems crying for attention.

Furious efforts to change the Congress leadership before the no- confidence vote failed because there was no consensus on a replacement. Also the Left's offer that it will change its posture should the Congress jettison Mr Rao was so insulting to many Congressmen that they persevered with him. Although there is little enthusiasm for his leadership, rivalries between prime ministerial aspirants and the dominant Southern component in the Congress parliamentary party have served to keep Mr Rao afloat.

The prime minister was also helped by the fact the Opposition, despite its sound and fury, did not want to push the country into a general election. The Left has made no secret of its aversion to precipitating an early general election. And the Bharatiya Janata Party would rather wait till the assembly elections in the four Northern states before deciding on its tactic to try and force a general election.

As the government lurches from one crisis to another, the plethora of crises actually reduce Mr Rao's vulnerability. Opposition attacks on the government have become diffused as it shifts its focus from the securities scandal to Bofors to bomb blasts to economic policy.

Recent trends, however, suggest a winnowing is taking place in the issues likely to dominate the political debate in the next few months, posing a danger to the prime minister. Ayodhya has taken a back seat because, although the BJP can raise the temperature again, there is nothing really left to debate. Not even the most incorrigible optimist believes the Babri Masjid can be rebuilt on the same spot. And the tactic of involving the Supreme Court has worked for the government because it has given New Delhi a breather.

The government's efforts to refurbish its secular credentials through the introduction of a bill to separate religion from politics have brought it little credit or credibility. The bill is badly drafted. The political motives of the government are so transparent that not even the Left is convinced of the bill's *bona fides* in combatting communalism.

The BJP, in any case, has extracted as much mileage as it could out of Ayodhya. Its symbolism remains important. And the underlying theme of the party's philosophy of *Hindutva* has won adherents in large swaths of North India, now extending its influence to pockets elsewhere. The party, therefore, is making great efforts to fasten on to other issues.

The BJP, in fact, is greedily eyeing corruption as an issue. On the face of it, the opportunity for converting corruption into a major talking point is immense. The revival of the Bofors pay offs, thanks to the cooperation of Swiss courts, the horrendous securities scandal with aspersions cast on the prime minister's son and Mr Harshad Mehta's dramatic, though improbable, charge of bribing Mr Rao to the tune of Rs 10 million would lend themselves to mounting an attack on the government during the election time.

The difficulty is that Rajiv Gandhi lost an election because of Bofors and unless the malfeasance of those in or close to power can be nailed down, much of the impact of the charges would be lost. Besides, the people are becoming increasingly cynical about the ethical mores of all parties.

The BJP cannot claim to be virtuous because it, too, collects money from business houses. A story doing the rounds of the capital is of Mr Murli Mahohar Joshi refusing an offer of Rs 2.5 million from a large business house because it was too little. And the stories one hears of Ms Jayalalitha's Tamil Nadu put anything done in New Delhi in the shade. The BJP nonetheless is hoping to have her as an electoral ally.

With all parties tarred with the same brush, to a lesser or greater extent, the middle class is most concerned about corruption at the lower levels of the administration. It is impossible to get the most elementary services—the tax paying citizens' due—without greasing palms. While politicians wax eloquent about swindles of thousands of millions, they have no solution to offer on ridding the country of the all pervasive corruption.

The most serious charge against Mr Rao's government is his indecisiveness, a seeming paralysis of will in tackling urgent problems. On balance, it has less to do with the government being a minority one than with temperament and background. A politician who can work only through a consensus in and outside his party is faced with confrontational situations which demand daring and leadership of the highest order.

Mr Rao survives because his two main rivals in the Congress cancel each other out and the opposition parties, for their own reasons do not want the Congress government to fall now. But indecisiveness is difficult to convert into an election slogan that will sell. The Congress needs concrete evocative examples.

The BJP's effort to relate Mr Rao's flaw to Kashmir, Punjab and the Northeast has a limited appeal. The situation has improved dramatically in Punjab, the Northeast remains remote in most Indians' consciousness and many previous governments and prime ministers are also responsible for the sins committed in Kashmir.

The issue really boils down to painting the Congress as a tired old party whose usefulness to the country is diminishing. People do not need much convincing on this score but they ask the inevitable question, after their two unhappy experiences with non- Congress governments, about the alternative. With Mr L.K. Advani as the party president, the BJP is trying desperately to show that it is the alternative. Hence it needs other issues to buttress its claim.

Preparation for an early election, perhaps some time next year, have already begun. The fate of the luckless Mr Ajit Singh after he had pitched his price too high for the Congress is making the prospect of a coalition, if not merger, of the Janata Dal splinters in Uttar Pradesh a distinct possibility. A reconciliation has already been accomplished in Karnataka. The nebulous Left-JD coalition is likely to endure because the former has nowhere else to go.

The BJP is hoping for an alliance with the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu in substance, if not on paper, and is working overtime in Karnataka. To its delight, it discovered that its supposed pariah status after December 6, 1992, had not inhibited the Left or the JD from keeping its company on the no-confidence motion. But the BJP remains a Northern party and must perforce seek allies in the South to have a chance of achieving power in the next general election.

Meanwhile, Mr Rao must mark time till the four assembly elections are held, probably in November, to discover the limits of his political longevity. UP is outside the Congress's reach, but if it does badly in the two major states of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, Mr Rao's innings will be over. A major crisis or proof of financial skulduggery could unseat him earlier, but the probability is that he will face his Waterloo after the assembly elections.

*** Stalemate Foreseen in Assembly Elections**

94AS0047L Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 27 Sep 93 p 8

[Article by Nikhil Chakravarty: "A Cold Coming of It"]

[Text] The litmus test for the Congress leadership and the prime minister in this poll ordeal should be determined. Realistically, no Congressman of perspicacity expects that the Congress can sweep the polls. His primary objective today is to see that the Bharatiya Janata Party is prevented from coming back to all the four states as it did in the wake of Mr L.K. Advani's Ram rath yatra in 1990. Within this parameter, the Congress naturally would like to gain vantage points for its future course for returning to office. The party would want to keep the BJP out of power in all the four states. At the same time, it is keen to see installed such coalitions as would have to depend on Congress support for their survival.

By present reckoning, things are better for the Congress in Himachal Pradesh and possibly in Rajasthan where the main gladiators' contest will be between the Jat battalions of the Congress and the Rajput forces of the BJP. Madhya Pradesh looks like an arena of imponderables for both the Congress and the BJP.

The Uttar Pradesh scene holds no prospect whatsoever for the Congress. The seasoned election operators of the party do not seem to be wasting their time day dreaming. Instead, Congress bosses seem to be backing a Mulayam Singh Yadav-Mahendra Singh Tikait combine to prevent a Janata Dal-Mulayam Singh alliance. Because in the event of the former putting up a good show, the Congress can offer its backing to such a coalition either by directly joining or by lending support to it. However, a Janata Dal-Mulayam Singh alliance may win the majority of seats on its own, giving the Congress no chance to manipulate such a ministry.

The Congress leadership is now taking no chances with the BJP and its fellow travelling band. For this it is not depending on electoral strategy. Hence the attempt at pushing through Parliament the bills to delink religion from politics. Provoking widespread public disapproval with their draconian measures, the bills intend to somehow muzzle, if not ostracise, the BJP. Failing to beat back BJP propaganda through political means, the Congress has adopted this new method. What the Congress seems to have forgotten is that in a democracy what could not be accomplished through political means is now sought to be foisted by administrative means.

Since the delinking bills are not liked by even a fairly good section of the Congress itself, the government is reported to be moving towards launching prosecution for the demolition of the Babri mosque on December 6, 1992, against the top leaders of the BJP and other members of the sangh parivar. Any such move on the eve of the elections in the four Hindi states might boomerang. Instead of unifying all the forces against the BJP, this action might attract sympathy votes for it. Combatting the communal danger with administrative measures and hurried legislation can be suicidal, apart from offering the mantle of a martyr to the BJP leadership. Moreover, the present government does not seem to have mobilised sufficient political support for any strong repressive measures against any of the sangh parivar.

As for Mr Rao personally, the election battle may decide his fate as prime minister. If the BJP upsets the Congress's calculations, the blame will be foisted on Mr Rao himself. He is blamed by a large body of the public including a section of the Congress of being soft towards the BJP. He is therefore held responsible for the Babri mosque demolition. To overcome this handicap, in recent weeks the prime minister has been taking stridently anti-BJP postures. This explains the sudden move to launch prosecution against the authors of the demolition.

In history one finds frequent examples of rulers and politicians having taken drastic steps to disprove the charge of being weak kneed.

Mr Rao is already aware that if the Congress fares worse than it hopes, his rivals like Mr Arjun Singh and Mr Sharad Pawar will demand he step down from either the party presidentship or prime ministership or both. The blame for the Congress's decline will naturally be thrust on the party president who is also the prime minister of the country. In such a situation, the criticism of the Rao government from within the Congress will be more strident and may not be easy to set aside.

In contrast, the Opposition faces no such handicap. Even if the BJP does worse than it expects, it has little to be awkward about. The fact that it is entering the election battle practically without a single ally has already made the BJP leadership more realistic about its prospects in the future.

The Janata Dal on its part suffers from no illusion about its election prospects. If it can effectively unify its ranks by inducting Mr Ajit Singh and Mr Chandra Shekhar, then its psychological impact will be tremendous, particularly in Uttar Pradesh. By all accounts, a reinvigorated Janata Dal has the best of chances in this state. If such a development worries the BJP it unnerves the Congress no less.

The coming election contests do not necessarily force a polarisation of forces for the BJP and those anti-BJP. Many permutations and combinations are bound to come up. It cannot be an outright triumph for the BJP nor are all the forces ranged against it going to be welded together. Politics in this country never ceases to be a complex mosaic.

* Congress Defeat Feared, Seen Threat to National Security

94AS0046K Madras THE HINDU in English
29 Sep 93 p 8

[Article by Prem Shankar Jha: "Beyond the November Elections"]

[Text] If ever a party was in danger of dying from self-inflicted wounds it is the 108 year-old Congress Party of India. All that remains to be seen is whether it will inflict the coup de grace on itself, or make one final bid to save itself before it is overtaken by death. That final test of its resolve, or lack of it, will come after the November elections when in the wake of a very probable electoral defeat in all the four formerly BJP-held States that are going to the polls, the cry will be raised that the Congress party has lost its mandate and must once again submit itself to the will of the people.

Discussions with members of the Congress party reveal that except perhaps in U.P. its leaders do not consider the outcome of the November elections to be a foregone conclusion. In their reckoning the party has a fair chance of coming out ahead in Himachal and Rajasthan, and will give the BJP a good fight in Madhya Pradesh. But perhaps balled by these expectations, the party leaders have spent little time in considering how they should act if they lose all four States. There is even a gloomy groundswell of opinion that if this happens the party will have no option but to dissolve the Lok Sabha and seek a fresh mandate.

Both these views are wrong. Notwithstanding the size of Congress rallies and the promises being made by exuberant local cadres, the Congress is greatly in danger of losing all the three States. But even if it does, it has a duty to the Constitution and the people of India not to dissolve the Lok Sabha, but to complete its term in office, complete the programmes and policy changes that it has initiated and, by giving the country a good and principled government, to recoup its fortunes in the 30 months that will remain of its term in office. Two-and-a-half years are a very long time in politics.

The reasons for the Congress guarded optimism are not hard to discern: in the 1991 parliamentary elections, in which popular sentiment was very similar to what it is now, the congress won 45.94 per cent of the vote in Himachal against the BJP's 42.58, 44.98 per cent in Rajasthan against the BJP's 41.87 per cent, and 47.28 per cent against the BJP's 43.73 per cent in Madhya Pradesh. Thus in each of the three States the Congress held a 3.11 to 3.45 per cent lead. Many Congressmen have concluded therefore that had a State election been held in 1991, the BJP would have been thrown out in all the three States, and that the Congress' defeat in 1990 in these States was only because the entire Opposition had united to fight it. Why should this not happen now?

This optimistic surmise could turn out wrong on a number of counts. Firstly, only in Himachal, where the entire election was over before Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated, is the share of the vote of the two parties a reasonable guide to the way people really felt. Twelve out of 40 constituencies went to the polls after he was killed in Madhya Pradesh, and ten out of 25 in Rajasthan. According to a study done by New Delhi Television immediately after the results were announced, the vote swing in favor of the Congress caused by his death was 4.3 per cent in Madhya Pradesh and 12.3 per cent in Rajasthan. If one makes the important simplifying assumption that the normal voter preferences are no different in the constituencies that went to the polls after Rajiv died than those that went to the polls before his death, then the Congress' vote would have been 1.3 per cent lower in Madhya Pradesh and 4.9 per cent lower in Rajasthan. If one further assumes that 1 per cent in M.P. and 4 per cent in Rajasthan came from voters who would have otherwise voted for the BJP, then the Congress would have had a wafer-thin margin in M.P. of 1.15 per cent and would have trailed behind the BJP by a massive 7.8 per cent in Rajasthan.

Even if all of the additional votes that the Congress received had come from voters who would otherwise have abstained from voting but were moved by Rajiv's death to come out and offer him this token of their affection (there is a good deal of evidence, also in the researches of New Delhi Television that this was indeed so), the Congress would still have trailed by 1.8 per cent in Rajasthan and enjoyed a lead of a bare 2.15 per cent in M.P. It would

require a gain of just barely one per cent in the two States for the BJP to forge ahead now.

Almost anything could bring about a vote swing of this magnitude: one could be an increase in voter turnout. Despite the fact that it was a parliamentary election, in 1991 only 45.56 per cent of the electorate cast its vote in Rajasthan, and 41.83 per cent in M.P. Only in Himachal, where people were not borne down by the crushing heat, was the turnout a normal 57 per cent. Since the turnout is bound to be much higher in November, the outcome of the elections is likely to depend far more on how those who did no vote in 1991 will vote today. Can the Congress be certain that these marginal voters will vote for it?

They certainly did after Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in 1991. The all-India shift in vote to the Congress was 7.3 per cent, which was almost the same as the highest turnout of voters after the assassination. But all the results of the bye-elections held recently show that this sympathy wave has ebbed. What is more, there has been a decisive shift of vote away from the Congress in key constituencies that it had always won in the past.

Long before this month's humiliating defeats in Chowringhee (Bengal) and Ottapalam (Kerala), and the victory of the AIADMK in Palani (Tamil Nadu) without any help from the Congress, the Congress fared extremely poorly in bye-elections held in May. The Chowringhee result confirmed that Muslims, by and large, are going to vote en bloc against the Congress wherever they see an alternative to it and the BJP, that has the least chance of winning. The Congress' defeat in Ottapalam was even more stunning, because it showed that Muslims were not the only ones who had turned away from the Congress.

The small margins by which the Congress stayed ahead of the BJP in 1991 in these three States is therefore no cause for comfort. The most that can be said in its favour is that its chances are brightest in Himachal, and worst in Rajasthan but are truly good nowhere. What then should the Congress do if it loses in all the three states?

The BJP will claim that the Congress has lost its mandate and that Mr Narasimha Rao should therefore dissolve the Lok Sabha. After Palani, the AIADMK will join the BJP in its demand. And if a leftist-backward combine comes to power in U.P. its suddenly inflamed ambitions will make it join in too. There are those in the Congress party who believe that the Government will have to give in, but if it does that will be its last and severest betrayal of the Indian people.

The habit which the Janata party initiated in 1977, of treating elections to the Lok Sabha as a referendum on state governments and demanding that these be dismissed if the former went against the party in power at the state level, did not only make nonsense of the federal nature of our Constitution, but made it very nearly impossible for any State Government to complete a five-year term. Over the last 16 years this has destroyed the quality of government.

If the November elections are allowed to become a referendum on the Central Government, it will set a precedent that will destroy stability and make long term planning impossible at the centre also. India can survive if a few State Governments are so afflicted at a time, but it will soon cease to exist if stable government at the Centre disappears, long term planning becomes impossible, and the sole preoccupation of transient ministers becomes to amass as much money as possible by selling the favours of their departments to the highest bidder.

India's 880 million people deserve better. Stability is of paramount importance if the faltering pace of economic reform is not to be reversed, if inflation is to be contained, if a foreign exchange crisis and a future breakdown of the economy is to be avoided, if Punjab and Assam are to remain calm and the insurgency in Kashmir ended.

Despite its numerical weakness, or quite possibly because of it, Mr. Narasimha Rao's Government has done more to resolve these problems than anyone before him. Nor is this Government's record unique in this respect—Mrs Gandhi's minority government of 1969-71 was also the best of its time. India needs the best government it can muster in the years ahead. Perhaps only a Congress Government fighting for survival will give it this.

* Elections in Hindi Heartland Seen Critical to Nation's Future

94AS0068J New Delhi INDIA TODAY in English 30 Sep 93 pp 61-65

[Article by Zafar Agha and Yubraj Ghimire: "A Crucial Curtain-Raiser"]

[Text] The end of November will witness what may turn out to be one of the most crucial elections in the country in the last two decades. Unless the Supreme Court sustains the BJP's [Bharatiya Janata Party] appeal asking for restoration of its dismissed governments in four states, the 145 million-strong electorate of the Hindi heartland will go to the polls in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh to elect new state assemblies. The event will be much more than just an election. It could turn out to be a referendum on the BJP's Hindutva plank and give new ideological dimensions to the nation's politics. For, this would be the first opportunity for the voters to demonstrate what their real concerns are in the post-Ayodhya politics that has been dominated by whatever agenda the BJP has sought to set.

Two major ideological formations will be going to the hustings this time. The Congress(I) and National Front's secular platforms will confront the BJP's hard-sell Hindutva. The results from the 1,013 assembly segments in the four states will most likely also determine the timing and fate of the next general elections. The stakes are obviously high for all the contestants.

Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's own survival is at stake. A major debacle for the Congress(I) would accelerate demands from his challengers to step down. For the BJP too, if it fails to recapture most of the states where it ruled until the dismissal of its governments last December, its

dream of ruling Delhi will be shattered. If the Left Front-National Front combine and the Mulayam Singh Yadav and Kanshi Ram alliance fail to improve in Uttar Pradesh, their Mandal and minorities planks will suffer a jolt. While the BJP has already kick-started its electioneering machinery and strategy, the Congress(I) and the National Front are still groping for electoral clarity and alliances.

CONGRESS(I)

Clutching at Straws

The stakes have never been higher for the Congress(I). Not only is its future at stake but also its very relevance and identity as the liberal force that once commanded the Hindi heartland. But there's no concomitant sense of urgency within the party high command which is hopelessly mired in internecine struggles. Instead of fielding charismatic regional chieftains with power bases as lead campaigners in their states—Arjun Singh in Madhya Pradesh, N.D. Tiwari in Uttar Pradesh, and Nathuram Mirdha in Rajasthan—the party has decided to project Rao. The reason: his supremacy must not be upstaged.

This internal loyalist compulsion of protecting Rao from competition is tactically a bad move. First, because Rao will be flitting from place to place while other parties will pit a host of their own national campaigners against him. Second, unlike Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv, he is a weak campaigner lacking that belly full of fire so essential to charge up grassroots workers. Ideologically, too, it is fraught with danger: Arjun Singh would enjoy greater political purchase among the Muslim voters because of his clear stand on secularism as compared to Rao's soft-Hindutva line. And certainly, Tiwari would command greater credibility in Uttar Pradesh than Rao who is associated with the "southern strategy" of survival by suffocating leadership in the Hindi heartland.

The games Congressmen play with each other are endless. While on the surface Madhya Pradesh's Shukla brothers project defector Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav as a challenger to Laloo Prasad Yadav's OBC [expansion not given] hegemony in Bihar, another subterranean agenda is served: use Ram Lakhan to cut down to size AICC [All India Congress Committee] treasurer Sitaram Kesri, Congress(I)'s presiding OBC deity in Bihar. And Kesri responds by insisting that the Congress(I) should project an OBC candidate as Madhya Pradesh's next chief minister and thereby takes a swing at the Shukla brothers who are currently Rao's stalwarts there.

But while Congressmen take on each other, what has suffered is the formulation of an effective gameplan to take on the BJP. In a muddled way, party strategists are trying to be everything to everybody and are in danger of becoming nothing to anybody. The party is clutching at several straws aimed at winning over the Muslims, backwards, the rural poor and the urban intellectual secularists (who once formed a major support base for V.P. Singh but later deserted him on the Mandal issue). And all this is to be achieved within the broader framework of not alienating the Hindus.

The plan goes breathlessly like this: vow to rebuild the Babri Masjid, promise to bring demolishers to book to attract Muslim voters; take credit for the Mandal implementation with OBCs; stress the Panchayati Raj bill to rake in the rural vote; keep the religion bill issue alive to attract the urban intellectuals. All this would go hand in hand with constructing a new temple and keeping all Hindus happy and hitched to the Congress(I)'s bandwagon.

If life were that simple, Congress(I)'s return to power should be child's play. In reality all these initiatives are either jaded or could boomerang. The Muslims are still too shaken to be wooed by vague promises about a mosque. Its promised construction, in any case, would rekindle the Ayodhya controversy in which the only gainer has been the BJP. OBCs are unlikely to see Rao rather than Laloo or V.P. Singh as their Mandal messiah. The religion bill is unlikely to fool the urban intellectuals who see in events like the recent Ayodhya Som Yagya an attempt by the Congress(I) to pursue a simultaneous Hindutva line of its own. And Panchayati Raj, an issue that did not inspire voters when Rajiv used it as a "power to the people" slogan during the last parliamentary polls, can hardly be expected to electrify the rural electorate now.

The Congress(I)'s Hindutva strategy is also fraught with danger. So far it has not succeeded in attracting any prominent religious leaders to form the trust that will build the temple. And in its recent attempt to split the sadhu community it played into the hands of the VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad (vernacular)] which scored propaganda points by branding Congress(I) sympathisers as "sarkari sadhus."

The trouble is that any advantage the Congress(I) may have in the states, in terms of local charismatic leaders, or even its relatively good performance on the economy or foreign affairs, is being negated by the rampant infighting. In Uttar Pradesh, self-styled "Young Brahmin" leader Pramod Tiwari and state party chief Mahavir Prasad lose no opportunity to undercut the veteran Tiwari. Even worse, the Congress(I)'s image in Uttar Pradesh and Mahadya Pradesh has taken a severe beating under President's rule. Prominent Congressmen have earned such dubious reputations for taking personal favours and encouraging patronage at all levels that there is a widespread sentiment that corruption may accelerate if the Congress(I) comes to power.

Infighting is also blighting the Congress(I)'s chances in Himachal Pradesh. The state unit is bogged down by a battle between the faction led by PCC(I) [Pradesh Congress Committee] President Virbhadra Singh and the other patronised by Union Minister of State for Communications Sukh Ram. With leaders from both camps touring the state separately, the party has not been able to build up a coherent campaign yet. All that it is harping on is the anti-people policies of the dismissed BJP government.

The war within is only expected to intensify when tickets are distributed. With their disputed leadership, and muddled strategies, Congressmen are simply clutching at straws. At stake is not just the Hindi heartland, but survival.

BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

Moving in for the Kill

While other parties seem confused over strategies to adopt and alliances to form for the assembly elections in the four states, the BJP is already gearing up for the polls.

To derive whatever mileage it can from the Ram card, the party launched another series of rath yatras on September 11 from different parts of the country which will converge in Bhopal two weeks later. Though the ostensible issue is the religion bill, the campaign is clearly aimed at mobilising public support. L.K. Advani will lead the yatra from Mysore, Murli Manohar Joshi from Porbandar, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat from Jammu and Kalyan Singh from Calcutta. The yatras will also pass through the four states where polls are scheduled. They will give the leaders first-hand knowledge of the important issues and the strength of the party in various states.

Special significance is being given to Kalyan Singh's yatra. A backward class leader, he will try to woo the electorally crucial OBCs. The response to his campaign, particularly in Laloo's Bihar, will also help the party in deciding the extent to which it should accommodate backward castes while distributing tickets for the assembly elections. The BJP is obviously planning to steal the Janata Dal's thunder on the Mandal issue. This has become imperative if it wants to discard its 'Brahmin-Bania label. It is encouraged by the growing support from the backwards after the elevation of Kalyan Singh as chief minister in Uttar Pradesh in 1991.

In the absence of a discernible Hindutva wave this time, the BJP has shrewdly decided to go in for decentralised campaigning, giving local issues more attention. "Ram Mandir is of course a key issue, but not the sole issue," says Atal Behari Vajpayee. For instance, the party will focus on water supply in Rajasthan, and project the interests of apple growers in Himachal Pradesh. Other issues will be the dismissal of the BJP governments and the ban on the VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad (vernacular)] and the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sang (organization of service to the nation).

But the major problem the BJP has been facing is in selection of candidates. If it wants to go beyond the Brahmin-Bania fold, candidates will have to be chosen from outside its traditional support base. Going by the trend, however, it will not be a smooth affair for the BJP to accommodate the backward classes. Recently, the move to elect Janardhan Yadav, an MP and backward class leader, as the president of the Bihar unit was defeated by the party's traditional supporters, the upper caste Hindus.

In Uttar Pradesh, with the party contesting all 425 assembly seats, ticket distribution may fuel differences between top leaders. Kalyan Singh's attempts to allot tickets to his supporters among the backward castes are likely to be opposed by his rival, state party chief Kalraj Mishra. Mishra, however, is confident that this will not create dissension. "We have already finished preliminary work and it shouldn't not be a problem," he says.

In Himachal Pradesh, with state leaders having buried their differences, the BJP has a headstart over its rival, the Congress(I). Says former chief minister Shanta Kumar: "The rank and file in the party is clear about strategy." More royalty for the state's natural resources is on top of its manifesto.

Following an internal assessment exercise, the BJP is confident that it will regain power in all the four states. It has already set up a 17-member central election committee including eight members of the central parliamentary board for selection of candidates. The party is even clear on who should be projected as the chief minister in each state, the same one who ruled the state before dismissal.

The party's performance in the assembly elections will dictate its position in future national politics. It is already trying to move away from a strident Hindutva plank by broad-basing its appeal. If its efforts are not derailed by bottleneckedness, it will emerge as an acceptable alternative in mainstream politics.

NATIONAL FRONT

Frittering Away a Chance

It is the clichéd story of too many cooks. All with the same recipe and all doing their best to spoil the broth. Only the broth this time was meant for them. The Janata Dal, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Ajit Singh have a similar manifesto and vote bank and a common enemy—the BJP—yet they are pulling in different directions.

For the National Front, the stakes are highest in Uttar Pradesh. This is the only state going to the polls where it can make a significant impact. With Mulayam unwilling to surrender the advantage of an early start and an association with Kanshi Ram, the likelihood of the Front's alliance with him are remote. Worse, he and V.P. Singh have been accusing each other of playing into the BJP's hands.

V.P. Singh has, however, let the mediating Left leadership know that he would honour any agreement that they can extract out of Mulayam. Mulayam, on his part, has a clear strategy—ride the steam that his early campaigning had gathered and rely on the tie-up with Kanshi Ram.

Meanwhile, all the leaders have already launched their poll campaigns. V.P. Singh has hit the road on his rath, and has been playing his favourite Mandal card. Aware of the Muslim sentiment in favour of an alliance with Mulayam, he has been saying that he is willing. Says Ajit: "It is certain that we will fight the polls together." They propose to launch a joint campaign, raising the issues of corruption, communalism and the harm that the Centre's economic policies are doing to the agriculture sector. Mandal will feature, but not stridently.

Mulayam is comparatively better placed. His hectic tours have helped him finalise a rough list of candidates

in his strongholds. He has also been wooing defectors from other parties. He has already roped in Congress(I) leader Lav Bhargava and film director Muzaffar Ali. His equation with the prime minister has also improved dramatically since his help during the no-confidence motion. There may even be a poll understanding with the Congress(I), with Mulayam as the leader. But his most serious worry may start once Kanshi Ram lays his cards on the table, staking claim to some of the seats that Mulayam would like to fight.

Nevertheless, wooing the Mulayam Singh combine is still a risk. His new pitch to the Muslims, for example, hinting that they be given reservations too, could result in the same kind of Hindu backlash on which the BJP rode to power during the last elections. And Kanshi Ram's powerful anti-upper caste speeches could also send those Hindus in greater numbers to the BJP bandwagon.

* Assembly Elections Said to Decide Who Will Rule Nation

94AS0047A Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 1 Oct 93 p 8

[Article by Nihal Singh: "Pulse of the Heartland: For the First Time in Indian Politics, Assembly Elections Will Perhaps Decide Who Will Rule From New Delhi"]

[Text] The prelude to the campaigns for the elections in the four northern states has brought the major parties in the fray close to the moment of truth. Each party or combine is viewing the prospect with some foreboding for its own reasons.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, which has been tempted to exaggerate the importance of these elections, is having second thoughts after the various road shows it put up.

The Congress fears if it does not wrest at least two of the four states from the BJP, it will mean a new crisis for Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao and the government. For the Janata Dal, the elections, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, will decide whether it can emerge as something more than a regional force.

The fact is apart from the tactical and technical exercises that will be undertaken by each party, the larger questions of future polity are occupying their thoughts.

If for the BJP its performance will set the time frame for power at the Centre, for the Congress it will determine how near it is to a fall. The Janata Dal and its splinters will find out whether the hankering after a "third force" has any relevance in the Indian situation.

Through road shows the BJP has discovered yet again that its influence in the North and such virgin territory as Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh is indelibly linked to the single issue of Ayodhya. By exploiting this issue to the hilt, it ensures for itself a percentage of the vote at the cost of a national appeal and constituency.

This is a situation from which the BJP has been unable to escape. For all the trappings the party had attributed to itself in the shape of pronouncing policy on different issues and forming a kind of shadow government, it remains mired in Ayodhya.

Its ostensible purpose of conducting the yatras to agitate against the bill separating religion from politics was lost along the way as cries of jai shri Ram drowned out everything else, somewhat to the annoyance of Mr L.K. Advani.

The BJP's problem is though its elaborately built edifice of a Hindu India and Hindutva is a saleable idea, as the party's transition from near obscurity to centrestage has shown, it needs a longer time frame and considerable fine tuning to bring the BJP to power in New Delhi. Efforts to telescope the process have proved counterproductive.

The fabric of the party has also been strained by factional fights and the induction of an army of opportunists and self seekers. What the party has gained in the bedrock support of a fanatical and often lumpen constituency has been at the expense of the minorities, large sections of the urban middle class and others who abhor crude incitements to religious chauvinism.

Judging by the conclusions Mr Advani has drawn from the party's road shows, the BJP feels it has little option but to take the Ayodhya route yet again. Broadening the party's agenda has had to be sacrificed to the goal of winning the assembly elections.

The Congress is working out how it can ensure victory in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, in addition to Himachal Pradesh which seems to have been written off by the BJP. The Congress's sudden resolve to implement the Mandal commission report on backward classes is naturally tied to its quest for building a new winning combination.

Clearly the Congress cannot beat the BJP on the Hindutva turf. It was therefore left with little option but to poach the Janata Dal's espousal of the welfare of backward classes and social equity. At the same time, the Congress is seeking to woo back Muslims to its fold after their feeling betrayed by the demolition of the Babri mosque.

The two main arenas of contest for the Congress are Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, states somewhat evenly balanced between it and the BJP. The Janata Dal splinters can help or hamper the candidates of either party. While the lacklustre rule of the BJP in these states has done little to commend it, the Congress is handicapped by the disease of factionalism.

For the Janata Dal and its factious partners, Uttar Pradesh was and remains the main testing field. Apart from the Mulayam Singh Yadav-Kanshi Ram combine which seems to be holding despite the Congress's efforts, the strength of the anti-BJP forces will depend upon the ability of the Janata Dal's two remaining incarnations to come together and join forces.

An all encompassing left-centrist combination at present being assiduously promoted by the communists seems unlikely to materalise. What could greatly enhance the chances of the anti-BJP faction is an agreement, tacit if not

explicit, on seat adjustments. The Congress, out of the reckoning in Uttar Pradesh, could tip the scales against the BJP if it arrives at its own informal arrangements with the anti-BJP nucleus.

The Janata Dal splinters and Mr Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Satnaj Party have provided a bulwark against the BJP's Hindutva wave. There is an obvious incentive for collaboration on all sides to build up the anti-BJP plank.

But elections, as the Indian experience has shown, are also decided by the mobilisation of forces and the creation of an aura of victory through a propaganda blitz. Traditionally, the Congress has been more adept at marshalling propaganda resources than other parties, thanks to its experience and resources.

Recent elections suggest that the BJP is stealing a march on the Congress in this respect. It is flush with funds and has grasped the usefulness of technology in the information age to influence voters. The BJP's new emphasis is on video cassettes, tapes and snappy propaganda films to woo an electorate that is politically conscious but, in large pockets, illiterate.

The Congress' enthusiasm for newspaper advertisements is somewhat misplaced. Though they do play a part in spreading the party's message they are no match for electronic warfare. Besides, it is a sign of the demoralisation in Congress ranks that its workers can no longer match the fervour of BJP volunteers in converting support into votes.

If the Congress fares poorly in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, pressures will mount in the party to seek an alternative leader. Besides, the BJP will mount a campaign for an early general election if it wins in Uttar Pradesh.

None of the non-BJP parties seems keen on early parliamentary elections, particularly if they provide an opening to the BJP to wrest power from the Congress at the Centre. However, the erosion of Congress credibility as a ruling party could force an unwelcome election on the country.

It is the first time in India's electoral history that a set of assembly elections has taken on such portentious overtones. Normally, the electorate enjoys the luxury of voting one way in assembly elections and quite differently for parliamentary candidates. In the first instance it votes to register protest and in the second to ensure stability. If the electorate is conscious of its new responsibility, it could surprise the parties.

The communists have been the most lucid about acting upon their belief Uttar Pradesh holds the key to the future. A state which has traditionally provided the underpinnings of support to Congress rule at the Centre is today a testing ground for the BJP and a new amalgam of centrist and left forces, with the Congress watching from the sidelines.

* Review of Election Prospects for Different Political Parties

94AS0042A Calcutta ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA in Bengali 2 Oct 93 p 4

[Article by Sunit Ghosh: "Thinking of Election, Janata Dal Leaders Are Already Presuming Victory"]

[Text] The beating of the drums of Durga Puja [Bengali Hindu religious festival] has not yet begun, but the striking of election drums has already started. This music will continue several days after the silence of the puja drums. Of course, Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Shesan is the chief drummer. This controversial "bulldog" bureaucrat rejecting all the requests coming from the political parties decided to hold the legislative assembly elections to five North Indian states—Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and the union territory of Delhi—before Diwali [festival of lights]. The election episode will last from 6 to 27 November. It will start in Delhi and ends in Madhya Pradesh. According to the declared program the voting for the Delhi legislative assembly will be held on 6 November, Himachal Pradesh on the 9th, Rajasthan on the 11th, Uttar Pradesh on the 18th and 21st and Madhya Pradesh on the 24 and 27 November.

Immediately following the Dashera-Ramlila [festival offering prayers to Lord Ram] the biggest religious festival of the Hindus in Northern India is the Diwali. Both these festivals will be quite significant this time for political reasons. Whatever efforts the Narasimha Rao government might make to separate religion from politics for the purpose of cornering the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP], the effects of these two festivals are bound to fall on the election propaganda. This time the Ramlila and Diwali festivals will be observed all over Northern India with pomp and grandeur. Both these festivals center round Rama. Ramlila is a victory for benevolent Rama over sinister Ravana [the demon king], and Diwali is Rama's return to Ayodhya after 14 years of banishment. It goes without saying that election propaganda that will be carried on in both these festivals, the BJP will come out triumphantly. The BJP leaders know it pretty well that even if the religious bill comes into effect, it won't be able to silence the Rama devotees in Northern India. Perhaps knowing it Lal Krishna Advani, president of the BJP, declared quite firmly on his return from the "Janadesh Yatra" [a public awakening campaign—aimed at mobilizing public opinion against the bill on religion] that the Rama temple will be the primary "issue" in the next elections. Without paying the slightest heed to the reactions of the so-called secular forces, he bluntly said that his party is not at all ashamed in dismantling a controversial structure, or in other words, the Babri mosque.

The BJP leaders will also try this time to sail through the deadly river of election with the name of God "hail Sita-Ram" as they did successfully 2 years ago. And realizing it the Congress and other anti-BJP parties have taken the initiative to contest the BJP by holding tight to the Mandal Commission [favoring under-privileged classes]. But there are many claimants for the Mandal

Commission. Once the "Mandal" was the sole property of the "Janata [Party] family," but with the split in the family, the number of claimants for the "Mandal" increased. Moreover, the Congress is also now a claimant of the Mandal Commission. After the federal government moderately accepted the recommendations of the Mandal Commission at the orders of the Supreme Court, Sitaram Keshri group in the Congress Party instead of extending their hands to the section of Sitarams in the BJP, is now interested to snatch the "Mandal" itself from the grip of the Janata family. Realizing the uncertainty of the Muslim support because of the Babri mosque issue, the Congress Party is now busy to win the support of the underprivileged classes.

Meanwhile, the meetings and gatherings for elections have already started. All the parties are now busy in transporting people in trams and buses for increasing the crowd at political meetings. If the gathering of a few lakhs of people in an uninterrupted rain at a public meeting of Advani in the last leg of his "Janadesh Yatra" at Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh becomes a measuring rod of the popularity of the BJP, then the gathering of a large number of people at a public meeting in the same time in an inclement weather at Gowallior and Bhind districts organized by the Congress is no less significant. The main theme of the election propaganda of the Congress Party for the purpose of cornering the BJP is that despite remaining in power in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh it did not do anything to improve the lots of the common people. Therefore, it is necessary to bring the victory of the Congress Party for assuring "stability, security and administrative efficiency" in those states. The Congress alleged that in order to serve its political interests, the BJP has misused religion. But there is a doubt whether such type of talks would create any impression on the minds of the common people. The name of Rama is a mystic word for the God-fearing Hindu society and so it does not seem that even the slightest attempt to belittle the glory of Rama will be tolerated by the people of that society. Maybe for that reason the Congress Party still cannot speak out definitely on the issue of mosques and temples. In this regard among all the non-BJP parties, the statement of the Socialist Party belonging to Mulayem Singh Yadav is largely simple. Without concealing anything, Mulayem Singh has frankly announced that if his party comes to power the Babri mosque will be rebuilt on the same spot in Ayodhya.

The most woeful condition among the non-BJP parties is that of the Janata Dal. Even if the three factions of the Janata family once again become united, it is difficult to say how long those power-loving egoistic leaders would be able to survive together. Their influence is very limited in the states where elections are going to take place. Mulayem Singh Yadav, of course, has a support-base in Uttar Pradesh. But after building ties with Kanshi Ram of the Bahujan Samaj Party he is interested in secretly having seat arrangements with the Congress Party. Despite making very hard efforts the Left leaders have failed to bring back Mulayem to the Janata family. In this situation the support of the Muslim is immensely important. The vote bank for the Congress Party that existed in the Muslim community has been completely wiped out after the Ayodhya episode. They believe that the Muslim interests will not be at all safe so long as Narasimha Rao remains as the prime minister. Considering this fact Abdullah Bukhari, the chief Imam of the Jama Masjid, had the audacity to ask the various factions of the Janata family to once again unit under one banner. The notable thing is that besides only one—Forward Bloc Parliamentarian Chitta Basu—all other anti-BJP and anti-Congress "secular" centralist and leftist leaders, who are quite loud in their demands for keeping politics free from the influence of religion, are nicely digesting this "useless matter" of the fundamentalist Imam in politics. They did not make a single opposition to it. If the poking of nose of the Shankaracharya [Hindu religious leader] in politics is a crime, then Imam's poking is also a similar crime. Why the Left leaders remain silent in the case of Imam, when they do not spare the Shankaracharya? Moreover, Imam's audacity will indirectly benefit the BJP. The Imam has once again made it clear that the Muslims in India are first Muslim and then Indian. If Muslims have any mind, then that has been mortgaged to the Imam. Under the Iman's command they will go to the voting centers as puppets and cast votes to the party and candidates liked by Imam and thereby complete their democratic responsibilities. Taking advantage of this communal politics perpetrated by the Imam and his followers, the BJP will undoubtedly strive to win the hearts of the Hindu voters.

The victory or defeat in election largely depends on the organizational strength of the party. Judging from that angle the Congress and the Janata Dal have reasons to be worried. The factional-squabble in the Congress Party has reached to such a stage from where it is rather difficult for the Congressmen to contest the election unitedly. Practically losing all hopes in Uttar Pradesh, the Congress is trying clandestinely to come to an understanding with Mulayem Singh Yadav and Kanshi Ram. Even the greatest optimists do not believe that the Janata Dal leaders will fight against the BJP inseparably and unitedly by eliminating their rivalries. The Janata Dal leaders have taken it for granted that if the Congress is defeated in the next election in the four major Northern Indian states, then there is bound to be a mid-term Lok Sabha [lower house of parliament] election. Brooding over that election, the Janata leaders have already started blowing their trumpets before victory. A fight has begun among them on who will be the prime minister if the Janata Dal comes again to power at the center. Vishwanath Pratap Singh [former prime minister] has declared that Laloo Yadav [now Bihar chief minister] will be the prime minister if the Janata Dal comes to power in the center. But another faction of the Bihar Janata Dal wants to put Sarad Yadav, the leader of the Janata Dal in the parliament, to the position of the prime minister. Once the Leftists used to get the pleasure of imagining Malayem Singh Yadav as the would-be prime minister of India. There is a doubt, if Mulayem will now get any recognition among the number of claimants in the Janata Dal. Despite having factional conflicts, at this moment among all the opposition parties the BJP is

comparatively more well-integrated and well-disciplined organization. Even one year before it has administered the four states quite efficiently. The BJP has a strong organization at the grass-root level in all the four states. This time there will be a fight between the BJP and the anti-BJP parties. But as the anti-BJP forces are divided into various camps, the final outcome might go in favor of the BJP. If this possibility becomes a reality, then the Lok Sabha election will be inevitable. Considering this factor Narasimha Rao has urged the ex-Congressmen to return their home. Will they agree to embark on a dilapidated boat of the Congress Party knowing the inevitability of its sinking?

* Prospects of BJP, Congress (I), Janata Dal Analyzed

94AS0041B Varanasi AJ in Hindi 6 Oct 93 p 12

[Article by Amitabh Agnihotri: "The State Election Situation"]

[Text] The great election has been declared. These vidhan sabha elections in Hindi-speaking states will determine the direction of Indian politics and also the roles of the Congress (I), the BJP, and the Janata family in our political stage.

The present political thinking such as economic development, secularism, Hidutva, and social justice will be tested in this great war. While the Congress (I) will measure the height of its leadership in the battle field, the BJP and the Janata Dal will measure the heights of the flags of Ayodhya Campaign' and social justice' respectively.

There are three specific aspects related to these elections in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Delhi that make these election the most important of all the elections held after the independence. The Congress (I) enters the battle field without the stateliness of the Nehru family on its side for the first time. It would be the first time that secret ballot will be taken over the very sensitive issue of Ayodhya's disputed structure. Third, first time after implementing the Mandal recommendations, the people will decide who will be credited for this achievement—to the Janata family or to Sita Ram Kesari and his Congress (I).

CONGRESS (I)—These vidhan sabha elections will also determine in the Congress (I) horoscope its age of rule over India. Narasimha Rao's total leadership will be tested in the light of these election results. This will be his first and the most difficult fire test. It will be the first time that the Congress (I) will enter this demanding arena on a blistering hot noon without the glories of the Nehru family and the umbrella of Mandal commission. The Congress (I) itself has concluded that the party never lacked slogans, issues, and charisma of a great leader as it is lacking now.

Additionally, for the first time the party is surrounded by the vicious cycle of willfulness the self-styled kings in the party and indecisiveness of its leadership. According to a principal leader of the party, "This is the first that the secular nature of this party is being questioned. This has been our greatest asset until now. Our role in the Ayodhya fiasco has caused both the Hindus and the Muslims to suspect our party's credibility. At present, this is our greatest challenge."

Not only the opposition parties, but the Congress (I) leader themselves admit the fact in informal conversations that the election results in these states will determine the future of the party and that of Narasimha Rao. The Congress (I), divided between the camps of satisfied and dissatisfied, is waiting for these results.

The Congress High Command has its own demands before giving control of election strategy to the prominent leaders in these states. Because of this tendency they have opted to centralize the whole election policy and process instead of involving Arjun Singh in Madhya Pradesh, Narayan Dutt Tiwari in Uttar Pradesh, Nathu Ram Mirdha in Rajasthan, and Virbhadar Singh in Himachal Pradesh in the process. This strategy of the Congress (I) points to the shaky ground its leadership is standing on.

Ayodhya issue will be the greatest election challenge to the Congress (I). Both the BJP and anti-BJP parties will challenge it. The BJP will put the Congress (I) on the defensive by calling its actions anti-Hindu, and the non-BJP opposition parties will blame it for the 6 December episode. The Congress (I) is still in the limbo over this issue. The projects such as Som Yajna and cooperation are also stuck in its throat.

It will be difficult for the Congress (I) to take the credit away from the Janata Dal for Mandal achievements and cash it through the ballot box. Its election future also depends on how far it succeeds in stealing the social justice trademark away from V.P. Singh. Panchayati form of administration and the new economic policy will not become the issues to help win election in these Hindi-speaking states. There is doubt that the reliefs given to the minorities will be able to restore the faith they lost because of the Ayodhya episode.

The Congress (I) used to have a special capital in all the elections held until now, and this was a recognized leader who was able to provide a stable government under his/her leadership. The Congress used this strategy successfully in each election. The dissension in the opposition and egotistic confrontations also gave more significance to Congress (I)'s reasoning. However, this will be the first election, the Congress (I) will not have the credibility or trust to stand behind its tested reasoning.

The Congress (I) team in Uttar Pradesh composed of Narayan Dutt Tiwari, Jitendar Prasad, Mahavir Prasad, Balram Singh Yadav, Kalap Nath Rai and Salman Khursheed is suffering from internal strife. The tug-of-war between Arjun Singh, Vidya Charan Shukla, and Madhav Rao Scindia in Madhya Pradesh is still going on, and there is no hope of its stopping even for the elections. In Rajasthan, Nathu Ram Mirdha does have people's support, however, he has been pushed aside. Everyone including Balram Jakhad, Rajesh Pilot, Ashok Galhot, Girija Vyas, Paras Ram Madrena, and Haridev Joshi are divided among various camps. In Himachal, the fight for control is between Communications Minister Sukh Ram

and Virbhadar. All in all, this is the picture of the Congress (I) that is entering the battle field.

In Uttar Pradesh, the Congress (I) has left Mulayam Singh Yadav and Kanshi Ram to crash the party.

Bharatiya Janata Party—The vidhan sabha elections in these major five states will not only get the opinion of the people about its Hindutva philosophy but also will give the people's mandate about its wish to establish rule a the Center. The BJP is also bidding everything it has. These elections will determine the role of BJP in our national politics.

The BJP has already decided on the issues. Once again, it will enter the battle field wearing the armor of Ayodhya' and Shri Ram.' Lal Krishna Advani had decided on the party election issues during the 15-day janadesh' trip of the party. The central issue will be Ayodhya accompanied by the problems caused by government efforts to practice secular politics. The BJP will initiate religious quest from Ayodhya and raise the slogan of protecting the democracy over the proposed legislation.

The party accepts the fact that this election will not only get people's vote on the 6 December Ayodhya episode, but also the decision of the people over its whole philosophy. The future political plans of the party will depend on these.

From among the appropriate issues, the Ayodhya issue tops the list for this party. The BJP will cash the Ayodhya issue alongside the legislation for excluding religion from politics. The programs such as agreement and Som Yajna will give a sharper edge to its strategy. The party has completed its "homework" before all other political parties by sending its janadesh' tours in all directions. This will help it during the coming elections.

In addition to Ayodhya, the party will make rampant corruption at high level, terrorism, Dunkel proposals, and the explosive situation in Kashmir as its election issues. It will also try hard to present its martyr image' to the people because of the dismissal of state governments controlled by it.

The BJP is participating in all election districts for the first time. Being free of coalition and collaboration efforts also will work for it. That is why, it has been more active in election activities than any other party. Generally, the BJP is free of internal strife. However, it has its worries in Madhya Pradesh and Delhi where the party is involved in factional disputes from top to bottom. The bitterness that surfaced during the party's organizational elections in this state is causing worry for the party. To protect the election atmosphere from the cold war among Sunder Lal Patwa, Kailash Joshi, and Virendra Kumar Sakhlecha in Madhya Pradesh is the party's top priority.

Similarly, the shadow war going in between O.P. Kohli and the Khurana-Sahni-Malhotra triad in Delhi is causing worries for the party leadership.

The BJP goals are loftier than other parties. Winning anything less will directly effect its political position. Its criteria is to bring back its four governments in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh. It has been traditionally competing with the Congress (I) in Delhi. Therefore, its prestige is at stake in Delhi also.

The BJP will be put on the defensive over communalism by the Congress (I) and the Janata Dal family. The party has developed a clear line again in response and has put Ram and Ayodhya issues in the forefront to counter it.

The BJP riding the philosophical chariot of Hindutava will directly compete with the Congress (I) in three states. It will face a three-way fight in Uttar Pradesh. It will have to contest with the Congress (I), Janata Dal family, and Mulayam Singh-Kanshi Ram duo at the same time.

For propaganda, it has its triad (Advani, Bajpayee, Joshi) as well as four former chief ministers, and party's saffron-clad sants and legislators. It has direct competition with the Congress (I) over the use of modern propaganda methods. Only these two parties have open competition in using audio-visual and print media.

JANATA FAMILY—The challenge by the Janata Dal is mainly limited to Uttar Pradesh. The challenge that has emerged from the cooperation between V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, and Chowdhery Ajit Singh has a special meaning in the election politics of Uttar Pradesh.

The political equation in Uttar Pradesh have been effected by Mulayam Singh Yadav's remaining separate from the Janata family. Kanshi Ram and his support can become an election powerhouse in the state's politics.

The slogan of social justice raised by the Janata Dal will go through a very difficult fire test this time. Its situation in this great war will prove a lesson to other parties, and will also determine the political future of Vishwa Nath Pratap Singh.

In addition to political justice, the Janata Dal will have agricultural policy, Dunkel proposals, and corruption in its election arsenal. It will focus more in the rural areas.

Both the Janata family and Mulayam Singh Yadav will try to rob the Congress vote bank over the secularism issue. The Janata Dal is moving with the belief that the minority votes will be divided between V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav. However, it hopes that because of its national image it will get more minority votes than Mulayam Singh and Kanshi Ram in Uttar Pradesh where the number of Muslims is comparatively larger.

The Janata family will besiege both Narasimha Rao and Lal Krishna Advani by accusing them of the destruction of the disputed structure in Ayodhya. It will accuse one of theft and the other for posting bail for the thief.

The family will make its presence known in Rajasthan. It has 54 vidhan sabha seats after the 1990 elections. In Madhya Pradesh, where the Janata Dal had only 28 seats, its presence will be felt only marginally. However, the role of Bahujan Samaj Party's Kanshi Ram will be important in Madhya Pradesh. Recently, the influence of the Bahujan Samaj Party has increased in some parts of this state.

However, the greatest challenge for the Janata family, that has been made up of various parts, will be its credibility. It must convince this huge Hindi-speaking region that its egotist leaders will not repeat the past history. Assuring the people of it will be the greatest challenge for the Janata family.

The Janata family will try fully to keep its hold on the Mandal issue in this election. It is aware that the Congress (I) is trying to reap this political harvest that belongs to it.

* Battle in Hindi Heartland Seen Battle for National Power

94AS0046H Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 8 Oct 93 p 4

[Article by Shekhar Iyer]

[Excerpt] The Election Commission's announcement of holding assembly polls in four states—Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh—between November 6 and December 7 has galvanized the major political parties into facing what will be a crucial battle for power and their survival. The polls are to take place in a new political environment created by an event which occurred nine months ago: the demolition of the 400-year-old Babri Masjid at Ayodhya. The day, December 6, dramatically altered the agenda of the political parties, affecting as it did the equations between communities.

The coming elections in the four states, all ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party until the dismissal of the state governments in the wake of the demolition, will be a pointer as to who will eventually occupy the gaddi in New Delhi. The electorate of the four states holds the key to one-third of the total seats in parliament. A decisive verdict in favor of one political group means that it has a good chance of capturing power at the center. Aware of the implications of such a verdict, the major players—the Congress, BJP and Janata parivar with the leftists in tow—are readying for battle.

Most confident is the BJP whose governments were dismissed by the Congress-ruled center. Their confidence is at its peak in Uttar Pradesh where the Ram mandir issue has sharply polarized the voters along communal lines. In Madhya Pradesh, home of Congress stalwarts like Arjun Singh, Madhavrao Scindia, V.C. Shukla and Kamal Nath, both the Congress and the BJP expect the fight to be tough. In Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, the going may not be altogether easy for the BJP. But the outlook is not all that rosy for the Congress either.

The election dates have not been notified even nine days after chief election commissioner T.N. Seshan made his announcement of the polls. According to Seshan, the Election Commission is awaiting the Supreme Court's decision on the writ filed by the center challenging the Madhya Pradesh High Court's judgment quashing the imposition of president's rule. Seshan's antics do put a question mark on the conduct of the polls.

An element of uncertainty is also added by Seshan's battle with the center on the deployment of paramilitary forces. The chief election commissioner thinks it is the commission's prerogative to decide how many policemen should be posted where. The center says law and order is a state subject and hence the local government is the final authority; the commission is welcome to make suggestions. With the matter now in the Supreme Court, the slightest provocation could make Seshan cancel polling.

Given this backdrop, if and when the elections are held in four states, there are several interesting possibilities that could emerge. One, a landslide win for the BJP in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh—a prospect dreaded by the Congress, the centrist Janata Dal and the communists, for it will vindicate the BJP's stand on the demolition.

If this were to happen, the Rao government will have to call it a day. BJP victories in all four states would lead to a loud demand that general elections be called since the government at the Center has lost its mandate. Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao will find it difficult to steer a shipwrecked Congress with his rivals asking for nothing less than his head. Congressmen, shattered by the BJP's success, will then find themselves groping for new leadership as well as an identity. It is likely then that the Janata parivar and whatever remains of the Congress will come together. The communists may decide to back this combine as a bulwark against the BJP.

Having returned to power in Lucknow, Bhopal, Shimla and Jaipur, a buoyant BJP leadership will prepare for the general elections. If the BJP were unable to bring about a whitewash and was comfortably placed only in UP and MP, with the Congress being mauled in the two states, it would still be in a commanding position. The loss of Rajasthan or Himachal Pradesh will no doubt be upsetting to the BJP, but the euphoria generated by its success in UP and MP will deprive the Congress or the Janata parivar of any advantage gained by victory in the other two states.

The second possible scenario is that the Congress may halt the BJP's success in Uttar Pradesh midway and gain complete control of Madhya Pradesh—a rather unlikely event which may save the Congress government at the center and give the party a fresh lease of life. Rao may then find his position threatened as MP heavyweight Arjun Singh will demand his pound of flesh for the success. But the return of the BJP to power in UP even with reduced strength could still be a sore point for the Congress. The BJP may find its dream of governing from Delhi grow farther. But the centrist parties could take heart that they may be able to outsmart the BJP when the general elections are held. The Congress and the Janata parivar could unite under a new dispensation minus Rao to face the Lok Sabha polls. The left may actively support a combined front against the BJP.

Another likely outcome is of the Janata parivar, led by Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav, putting up a tough fight against the BJP in Uttar Pradesh, denying the latter sufficient seats to claim power. At present, however,

this seems unlikely because Yadav has refused to join hands with V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar and Ajit Singh and his close ally, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Kanshi Ram, cannot give up the Congress.

But if, at the last minute, a unity formula is brokered to bring together the entire Janata Dal fraternity, the BJP could find itself in serious trouble. In the event of the BJP failing to secure enough seats to form a government, the Janata parivar and the Congress could come together in UP, creating a new secular wave. In any case, the BJP would find itself back to square one, with its credentials to be an alternative political force in doubt. [passage omitted]

* Elections Analyzed State by State

94AS0055A Varanasi AJ in Hindi 10 Oct 93 p 11

[AJ Analysis: "Who Will Get the Roll"]

[Text] The election in the four Hindi states will be very important. In Uttar Pradesh, there will be a strong competition between the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party coalition. In the other three states—Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh—the contest is between the Congress (I) and the BJP.

The four states had BJP governments before 6 December 1992, however, when the disputed structure was turn down in Ayodhya on 6 December, these governments were dismissed. The Kalyan Singh cabinet was dismissed on 6 December in Uttar Pradesh and on 15 December, cabinets led by Sunder Lal Patwa, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, and Shanta Kumar in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh respectively were dismissed and president's rule was established.

Both Congress (I) and the BJP are trying very hard to establish governments in these four states. According to political observers, the election results in these four states will have far-reaching affect on Indian political scene because at present the minority government of Congress (I) is established at the Center. The BJP is the main majority party in the Parliament.

A Look at the Four States

We shall discuss only the four states here. The situation in Mizoram and Delhi is different. The 40-member vidhan sabha election in Mizoram will be held on 30 November. The announcement for the election will be made on 30 October. The four-year term of the state vidhan sabha will be complete on 29 January 1994. The presidential rule in Uttar Pradesh is to end on 5 December and on 14 December in the other three states. The situation in Delhi is entirely different. This was a union territory until now, and is being assigned a vidhan sabha for the first time. Because of the internal strife among the local Congress (I) leaders, the announcement for the election was not made here. The BJP, Janata Dal, and one Congress Party faction strong opposed this action. However, it is expected that the announcement to hold elections here will be made soon. The BJP has always been in control in Delhi. The Congress (I) is in the second place and the Janata Dal will contest at the third place.

Uttar Pradesh

This is the most important state from political perspective. No political party ever had a monopoly on this state with 425 vidhan sabha seats, however, the Congress (I) has enjoyed ruling this state most of the time. The Congress (I) lost its hold here in 1989 because of lack of development work and its own internal strife. Since then, it has been sitting in the opposition ranks here. The Janata Dal was in the first position in the 1989 general elections and formed its government here. The Janata Dal ran its government here for two years under the leadership of Mulayam Singh. When the Janata Dal was divided in Delhi, Mulayam Singh remained in Samajwadi Janata Party and saved his government with the cooperation of Congress (I). The BJP was never strong here, however, after the division within the Janata Party, people's disenchantment with the Congress (I), and the attention to the Ayodhya issue, the BJP emerged as a decisive force here in 1991 and formed its government under Kalyan Singh's leadership.

The truth is that the U.P. politics is the politics of caste equations. Compared to other states, the caste arithmetic is very complicated here because several parties claim leadership of the same group. It is the backward groups, minorities, and the Dalits who really can help one win here. The backward groups make up 45 percent, Dalits 22 percent, and minorities 15 percent of the total population. In other words, the backward, Dalits, and minorities make up 82 percent of the state's total population. Mulayam Singh himself belongs to a backward group, therefore, is considered the most popular leaders among the backward groups. He has some influence on the minorities because of this support for the Muslims. In order to charm the Dalits, he has formed an election coalition with the most popular Dalit leader, Kanshi Ram, and his Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). The BSP-SP coalition strongly believes that it is strong enough not to allow the communal forces to take hold in this state. They hope to establish their government under the leadership of Mulayam Singh.

The Congress (I) in this state is suffering from internal bickering and neglect by the Congress High Command. The Janata Dal could not emerge from its internal problems and breakups. Its leaders are peeking into other parties' kitchens and are cooking kedgerees of non-BJP or non-Congress (I) coalitions. Even today, they are suffering from selfish ambitions. No one know when this "kedgeree will be cooked." The BJP, in its various ups and downs, cannot see any other issue or problem but that of Rama.' Now it has started to sing the old song of Rama through its janadesh yatras [public mandate tours], however, the people are bored with it and will ignore these efforts. Still, the real contest will be between the SP-BSP coalition and the BJP. The BJP will maintain its number two position in the state. If the non-Congress and non-BJP parties form an election agreement, the BJP will find it very difficult even to win a few seats here because the average voter is tired of the Hindu card.

Madhya Pradesh

Geographically, this is the largest state. There will be election for 320 vidhan sabha seats here. This state has the majority of average families and aborigine tribes. The Muslims constitute only five percent of the population and, like other states, do not play a decisive role. The Congress (I) has always been number one and the BJP number two in this state, however, during the 9th Lok Sabha election, the BJP with the help of V.P. Singh won the majority here and succeeded in establishing its government in this state. The BJP won 219 out of the 320 seats while the Congress (I) had 55 seats and the Janata Dal only 28. Sunder Lal Patwa's government failed in achieving anything for which it should be remembered. In the 9th Lok Sabha election, the Congress (I) received 41.97 votes to BJP's 45.25 percent votes. This proportion was changed during the sympathy wave after Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. The Congress (I) received 46.16 percent and the BJP got 42.79 percent votes.

The Congress (I) and the BJP will have direct confrontation during the election. The Samajwadi Party, the Janata Dal, and left-wing parties will also participate. It is definite that it will not be easy for the BJP to win the election here because the people are disenchanted by the internal bickering of the party and inefficiency of the Patwa government. Meanwhile, the Congress (I) triad—Arjun Singh, Vidya Charan Shukla, and Madhav Rao Scindia—have united in Madhya Pradesh, and the former chief minister, Shyama Charan Shukla, is being presented as the future chief minister.

Rajasthan

The Congress (I) always had majority in Rajasthan, however, in the 9th Lok Sabha election, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat became the chief minister here with 85 seats for his party. The Congress (I) won only 50 and the Janata Dal bagged 45 seats. The veteran Congress (I) chief minister, Haridev Joshi, had to sit in the opposition ranks!

The RSS and the BJP is strong in this whole state, however, is suffering from bad internal factionalism, and might be defeated by the Congress (I). The Congress (I) is not decisively a victor here, either. Veteran leader Joshi is in the political margin now, and Paras Ram Madrena, the state Congress (I) president, has failed to organize the party for the election. The Janata Dal and other parties do not have much influence here. The Muslim vote, that makes up 7 percent of the total votes in the state, is still undecided. Himachal Pradesh

Himachal is a small state with glorious traditions. The Congress (I) has been strong here. The real contest here will be between the BJP and the Congress (I). The Janata Dal will affect the election results. The BJP had benefitted from the Rama wave' in '89 and had attained full majority by winning 43 of the 60 seats here. The Bahujan Samaj Party and other parties have nominal influence here. All these parties will register their positions in this election. The Congress (I) will compete with the BJP, however, it is difficult for either of them to get a clear majority.

Anyhow, if we look at the whole picture, the situation is not clear yet. This will be clear just before the election when the names of the candidates are announced.

* Hindi Belt Elections Seen 'Decisive,' 'Critical'

94AS0068M New Delhi INDIA TODAY in English 15 Oct 93 pp 42-47

[Article by Javed Ansari and Zafar Agha: "The Scramble for Survival"]

[Text] All elections are decisive but some are more decisive than others. The November elections in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh fall into this category because they will settle some big issues:

- Will the Congress(I) recover from its 1991 humiliation in Uttar Pradesh at the hands of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and its 1989 drubbing by the Janata Dal or will it lapse into total decay?
- Will the invocation of Lord Ram continue to work wonders for the BJP?
- Will V.P. Singh or Mulayam Singh emerge as the hero of the backwards and minorities?
- How many people in the four states decide to vote along communal or caste lines.

CONGRESS(I)

BACK TO THE WALL

As it fumbles to find a sense of direction, the party is like a blindfolded person trying to find his way out of a maze. There is no clear strategy in sight yet, beyond a decision to concentrate on the misdemeanours of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] when it ruled in the four states and the need to delink religion from politics. AICC(I) [All India Congress Committee-I] General Secretary Nawal Kishore Sharma, a member of the party's election strategy group, says: "We will highlight our achievements and cash in on their failures."

From the evidence so far, though, there will be more about the BJP's failures than about the Congress(I)'s achievements. The party plans to issue "chargesheets" against the four dismissed BJP governments. One that it has already released against the Rajasthan Government gives a flavour of what is to come. It reminds voters about the eight ministers with "proven criminal records," the closure of 6,000 schools, the closure of hospitals and an increase in the number of atrocities committed against Harijans. The party is determined to keep voters' attention focused on local issues rather than on the Ram mandir controversy.

Apart from the chargesheet idea, the Congress(I)'s cupboard is bare. It has no idea what it should do over the Ram temple issue. All a member of the election strategy group will say is: "We'll do whatever the Supreme Court tells us to do in Ayodhya." This will not be of much comfort to the Muslims who remember how the apex court had instructed the Rao Government to protect the Babri mosque. Nor is it likely to have Hindutva-leaning Hindus running around in excitement.

The party appears to be making no attempt at all to alleviate its image amongst the majority of Muslims for whom its very name is mud; not even in Uttar Pradesh where the party has always won elections with the help of Muslims who comprise about 17 per cent of the state's 73 million voters. In most districts Muslims form between 10 and 40 per cent of the population. In Rampur district, the Muslim percentage of the population is as high as 42; in Moradabad it is 40 and in Saharanpur it is around 37.

Its attempts to win over Mulayam Singh Yadav, though not entirely written off yet, were caught up in the party's usual internal disagreements. At a meeting last fortnight of the CWC [expansion not given], Arjun Singh, K. Karunakaran, Sharad Pawar and Rajesh Pilot were in favour of an alliance with Mulayam and Kanshi Ram in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. But they were opposed by Jitendra Prasad, Nawal Kishore Sharma and Dinesh Singh. In the end, a non-committal decision was taken to keep exploring the possibility of an alliance.

The lack of urgency on the subject of minorities could have to do with the party's realisation that while Muslims are a crucial element in Uttar Pradesh, they form only a small percentage of the populations in the other three states. In Madhya Pradesh, for example, it is the Harijans and tribals who are much more important, forming as they do about 38 per cent of the population and about 30 per cent in Rajasthan. The Muslims are not a big element except for the districts of Bhopal (18 per cent), Ujjain (11 per cent) and Khandwa (13 per cent). So the party might be reckoning that it is better for it to concentrate on winning in these three states since Uttar Pradesh is, in any case, a lost cause.

Both the Harijans and the tribals used to form the Congress(I)'s backbone in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan in earlier days. What happened in the last elections was that the BJP made inroads into the Harijan and tribal vote and the Congress(I) failed to make any attempt to undo the damage. Arjun Singh and Sitaram Kesri suggested that the party should project a tribal or Harijan leader as a future chief minister for Madhya Pradesh but the idea wasn't accepted because the party has adopted a policy of not projecting any candidate as chief minister. Says Commerce Minister Pranab Mukherjee: "This is not part of the Congress(I) tradition."

Whatever the party's final strategy, though, it stands a chance of working only if there is at least a semblance of unity at the top. Instead it's a divided house. A recent example was the big sulk by Balram Jakhar and Ghulam Nabi Azad over the apparent attempt by Tripura Governor Romesh Bhandari to "frame" them over a supposed financial deal with Harshad Mehta. Azad had an angry exchange with Rao during a cabinet meeting earlier this month since when he has boycotted two CWC meetings which were called to discuss election strategy.

The party is acutely conscious of Rao's woeful inability to warm anyone's blood with his speeches. To compensate for this, it is enlisting men like Arjun Singh, Madhavrao Scindia, Pilot and Kesri because they all command considerable support in the Hindi belt and will appeal to the backwards, the minorities and secularists.

Besides these men, Muslim leaders such as C.K. Jaffer Sharief, A.R. Antulay and Salman Khursheed will be sent into the field in Muslim constituencies and the likes of Balram Jakhar, Nathuram Mirdha and Balram Singh Yadav will be sent out to woo Jat and backward votes. And Rajesh Khanna has been told to induce his film friends to make the odd celebrity appearance.

At the moment, though, there is so much bad blood among the top leaders that one CWC member remarked: "It is one of the most ill-prepared polls the Congress(I) has ever faced." Probably also one of the most ill-thought out. For instance, all that Rao's determination to stress the issue of separating religion from politics does is to provide the BJP with a perfect chance to appear holier-than-Rao without the compensation of winning the Congress(I) any new friends.

BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

BACK TO THE TEMPLE

Despite desperate attempts to diversify its election plank to include wider national issues, the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] has only one card to carry it through the forthcoming assembly elections—the Ram card. The party's 15-day Janadesh Yatra, which had begun as a referendum on the practically dead religion bill, ended up as a defence of the December demolition. Leaders of the yatra in all four sectors exploited public religious sentiment by justifying the demolition as a tribute to Hinduism. Says Sushil Modi, member of the BJP's National Council: "Before December 6, the Hindus suffered from a persecution complex but now they feel victorious."

But he cannot claim to speak for the whole community as the BJP mainly represents Brahmins, Banias and upper caste Hindus, who have identified with it since its Jan Sangh days. In fact, this is one area where BJP leaders L.K. Advani and Kalyan Singh differ somewhat. The difference in approach was visible during the yatra. En route his 3,792-km Mysore-Bhopal sector, Advani made it clear that there would be no big change in candidates or fresh inductions.

However, Kalyan Singh, who covered 211 assembly constituencies in the Calcutta-Bhopal sector, favours sweeping changes in view of the new social equations. He realises that if the Muslims joined the Yadavs in either Uttar Pradesh or Madhya Pradesh, it would be detrimental to the BJP. To counter this, he has brought into the party the Lodha Rajputs, the Kurmis and a small section of backwards, mainly Yadavs.

The selection of candidates will be crucial. The BJP has called a meeting of the party's Central Election Committee on October 2 and 3. It will review the reports of the state observers who have already made a preliminary assessment of each aspirant's victory prospects in each district. Screening of the 20,000 applications already received by

the party will begin shortly. Meanwhile, the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (organization of service to the nation)] has begun an independent assessment of the candidates and will play a crucial role in the distribution of tickets.

The minorities are, however, unlikely to get any substantial representation in the BJP's final list. Although attempts had been made in recent months to tone down the party's strident anti-Muslim stance by giving minorities some tickets in the West Bengal elections, that is unlikely to be the case now. "The Muslims who have joined the party recently do not represent their community and giving them tickets will only lead to a Hindu backlash," says a senior BJP leader. Kalyan Singh has, in fact, gone so far as to recall the Deendayal Upadhyay era and renew the demand for Pakistan's re-inclusion in India as part of the dream for an Akhand Bharat.

Religion continues to dominate the BJP's thinking, despite its stand that places of worship should not be misused for politics. Former Rajasthan chief minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat began and ended his yatra in Delhi with meetings at the Gaurishankar Temple on the Haryana-Delhi border and the Laxmi Narayan Temple. Atal Behari Vajpayee was one of the few who protested against the policy of invoking religion for votes by deliberately not being too involved in the Janadesh Yatra. While the Muslims have been sidelined, the party intends to give wider representation to women, the youth and the backwards. There will be at least one woman candidate in each district.

For the BJP, the yatra—during which the leaders covered a total of 14,825 km, passing through 137 districts, 180 Lok Sabha and 605 assembly constituencies—was a useful run-up to the polls. It established that although the party does not have a leadership problem in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, in Madhya Pradesh it does. The response to Murli Manohar Joshi and Sunderlal Patwa in the Porbander-Bhopal section was far from enthusiastic. As Patwa entered Bhojpur, his assembly constituency, in Raisen district, there was a turnout of just 400 people.

The growth of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Madhya Pradesh is another irritant. In the last election, the BSP clinched second place in 48 assembly constituencies. An alliance between the Congress(I) and the BSP could wreck the BJP's prospects. The BJP's only reprieve is the infighting in the Congress(I) and BSP leader Kanshi Ram's assertion in Bhopal last week that he would consider an alliance with the Congress(I) only if Arjun Singh were to become its leader. Said a state BJP leader: "We will certainly gain if the BSP and the Congress(I) go two ways." The BJP is also counting on the Congress(I), the Janata Dal and the Mulayam Singh Yadav-Kanshi Ram combine going three separate ways. With the euphoria over the Ayodhya issue dying down in Uttar Pradesh, this should stand the BJP in good stead.

More than positive performance, the BJP is hoping to cash in on the changed political equations in the country, the infighting in the Congress(I) and the fact that the Muslims have been deserting the Congress(I) in places like Ottapalam in Kerala. In this new polarisation, it is the BJP versus the rest.

JANATA DAL

BACK TOGETHER

For the constituents of the undivided Janata Dal, the poll announcement presented a now-or-never chance—to bounce back to the national centre-stage together or hang separately. The Janata Dal, the Ajit faction and the SJP [expansion not given] opted for unity without haggling over the nitty-gritty. But despite the larger political profile, the best the party can hope for is making a difference in Uttar Pradesh.

Though Mulayam still refuses to play ball, reunification has overnight given a purpose and direction to the Janata Dal. Significantly, in the 1991 assembly elections the Janata Dal (V.P. Singh-Ajit) emerged as the second largest party by winning 21.3 per cent of the votes. Now it can also benefit from Chandra Shekhar's Thakur base.

The unity move has given a shot of adrenalin to the party. Its central office in Delhi has swung to life and already a representative committee is drawing up a carefully-calibrated electoral strategy, a salient point of which will be to win back the Hindus and the upper castes.

With individual leaders' strengths being pooled, the party can hope to bag a sizeable tally of seats, provided the people forgive the party's past record of fractiousness. The Janata Dal's base among the OBCs [expansion not given], Muslims and a section of the SCs [expansion not given] and STs [expansion not given] will be supplemented by Ajit Singh's support among the Jats and Muslims in Western Uttar Pradesh and among the traditional Lok Dal voters in parts of eastern Uttar Pradesh. The secular, OBC, farmer and Muslim votes—common to all the factions—will now be split only with the Mulayam-Kanshi Ram combine.

Unification may not, however, make any significant dent in the fortunes of Mulayam, who remains one of the most powerful non-BJP leaders in the state. But why is Mulayam not coming back to the fold? For one, he has been trying to look beyond his base among the Muslims and the OBCs and feels that aligning with V.P. Singh will merely reinforce his old image. Two, he is afraid of being eclipsed by joining a star-studded party. Three, in an alliance he will not be able to contest all the seats he wants to. His calculation is that no single party will get a majority in the assembly. As all the parties are bent on denying power to the BJP, they will be forced to support him in forming a government.

Mulayam has made a flurry of moves to broadbase his appeal and to cut into the BJP vote. He has toned down his vitriol on the Babri Masjid and rebuked the Delhi's Shahi Imam for blackmailing him on Janata Dal unity. He is also reaching out to the upper castes by underplaying Mandal.

He is wooing the trading class by promising concessions and the youth by offering to repeal the anti-cheating ordinance.

The compulsions of the leaders who have embraced unity are also apparent. The time spent in the political wilderness has chastened them. V.P. Singh was reduced to fighting for political survival in his home state. Ajit Singh was fighting for his position in western Uttar Pradesh. And Chandra Shekhar had almost ended up as a leader without a party.

In its new strategy, the Janata Dal will reduce its tilt towards the backwards and the minorities. In fact, with every party swearing by Mandal now, reservations have stopped being an inflammatory issue. V.P. Singh has now started demanding 10 per cent reservation for the poor among the forward castes. The party will also shun the controversial elements among Muslims to avoid a Hindu backlash.

What the party lacks in resources, it plans to make up for through a well-orchestrated campaign. It will be led by V.P. Singh, who has already covered a major chunk of Uttar Pradesh, Laloo Prasad Yadav, Ajit, Chandra Shekhar, Ram Vilas Paswan and Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. Almost all its MPs [Members of Parliament] and MLAs [Members of Legislative Assembly] from Bihar will camp in the state from the next fortnight and will be allocated an area, depending on the community and caste composition of the constituency. Uttar Pradesh is the only state in which the Janata Dal can have an impact as it has only a negligible presence in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

In giving tickets, the key criterion will be the candidate's likelihood of winning. All the 94 MLAs who won on the party ticket in 1991 will be repeated. And to prevent the BJP from making further inroads into the non-Yadav backwards, more Koeries, Kurmis and Lodhas will be enlisted. While V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar will push quite a few Rajputs in western Uttar Pradesh, Jats are likely to corner most of the seats there.

Partial unity in the Janata Dal has changed the political equations in Uttar Pradesh but the euphoria in the party may not find a matching response in the number of seats it wins.

• Congress (I) Survey Said to Forecast BJP Victory

94AS0059C New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi
15 Oct 93 pp 1,10

[Article: "Election Survey Shows BJP Leading"]

[Text] New Delhi, 14 October (JANSATTA). According to a survey conducted by Marketing Research and Advisory Service (MARS), the BJP has the majority support in the Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Delhi vidhan sabha elections, and "the situation of the Congress (I) in Uttar Pradesh is really bad." This survey analysis was commissioned by the Congress (I).

According to this survey, the BJP is in a strong position in Uttar Pradesh, while the Congress (I) is in the third place there. The BJP is expected to get 35 percent of the total votes and post a gain in the number of seats. The Congress (I) might win more than 50 seats from among the total of 421 seats. The main BJP competition is the Mulayam Singh-Kanshi Ram coalition. According to the survey, the Janata Dal that had challenged the BJP in 1991 is behind even the Congress (I).

This survey has also made suggestions. According to it, "The SP-BSP coalition will be major challenge in Uttar Pradesh and will receive 25 to 30 percent of the total votes cast. The Congress (I) has left only one alternative to challenge the BJP and that is to form a coalition with another party just like the SP-BSP coalition." According to the present indicators, the Congress (I) can win 80 to 100 seats from the total of 200. However, if it gets two percent additional votes, it can win 110 to 120 seats.

Most of the voters in Rajasthan express the feeling that the BJP had performed satisfactorily during is rule there. The survey also learned a new fact in addition to this. "The difference between here and Himachal Pradesh is that the BJP provided a better government in Rajasthan than in Himachal Pradesh." In Delhi, the Congress (I) is running neck-in-neck with the BJP. However, the survey gave the Congress (I) 28 seats and 33 to the BJP. The Janata Dal is expected to win 9 seats.

The survey report states, "The situation at this time is such that three to four percent of the voters are undecided. They used to vote for the Congress (I) in the past and later for the BJP. This time around, they can vote for anyone including the Janata Dal and the BSP. However, these votes will not make much difference as most of the votes will be divided between the Congress (I) or the BJP.

The most important issues for the voters in Delhi and these two states are the anti-corruption image and the ability to implement law and order. The Congress (I) is still benefitting from the old slogan of providing stability. According to the survey, the most important issues are reducing cost of living and stopping corruption. Interestingly enough, both the BJP and the Congress (I) fare equally on both these issues.

An important fact is that the U.P. voters like V.P. Singh because he supports reservations for the backward class and scheduled castes and tribes, communal goodwill, and protection for minorities. V.P. Singh has the highest support on these issues from among the three parties.

On the important issue of Ayodhya, 85 percent voters in Uttar Pradesh, 51 percent in Rajasthan, and 31 percent in Delhi want to rebuild Rama's temple. The voters were showed a card on which four issues were listed. In Uttar Pradesh, 57 percent rural and 46 percent urban voters want the temple built at the original site. "From among those who want to vote for the Congress (I), 61 percent said either the temple or the mosque can be built."

However, the supporters of the SP-BSP coalition and some Janata Dal people believe that the mosque must be built at the original site. "The SP-BSP supporters were more adamant than other party supporters in demanding that the mosque must be built exactly at the same site. In

addition, very few SP-BSP voters believe that only the temple should be built there."

The voters expressed dissatisfaction over the Congress (I) government's achievements. In Uttar Pradesh, 34 percent voters are not satisfied with the Congress (I). Twenty four percent voters in Rajasthan are displeased with the Congress (I). Meanwhile in Delhi, there are 29 percent voters who are not satisfied with the Congress (I) work in the government. According to the survey in Delhi, the most Muslims (48 percent) are not happy with the Congress (I) government. The percentage of non-Muslims who consider Narasimha Rao's government to be effective is only 26.

Seventy two percent of the BJP voters support Kalyan Singh's selection as the chief minister, while 33 percent of the Congress (I) voters want Narayan Dutt Tiwari. The SP-BSP coalition is undivided over the choice of a chief minister. One-third of the Congress (I) voters do not consider anyone qualified to be the chief minister.

In Rajasthan, 41 percent of the voters consider Bhairon Singh Shekhawat to be the appropriate candidate. Congress (I) leader Haridev Joshi comes in second with 25 percent support. The Delhi voters have not decided on the chief minister. Madan Lal Khurana and Sajjan Kumar of the Congress (I) can claim the position of chief minister in that order.

This survey was taken in June 1993. Questions were asked of 7348 voters in 49 vidhan sabha districts in Uttar Pradesh, 3419 voters in 22 vidhan sabha districts in Rajasthan, and 1444 voters in 14 Delhi vidhan sabha districts.

* Elections' Significance as Seen by Party Leaders Presented

94AS0066B New Delhi JANSATTA (Supplement) in Hindi 24 Oct 93 pp I, III

[Article by Hemant Sharma: "What Are the election Topics This Time?"]

[Text] The Congress (I) Will Win in all Four States—Narayan Dutt Tiwari, Congress(I)

These elections are important and pointed. It is expected the Congress (I) will win at least in four states. It is definite that the BJP will not be able to form a government and the people will vote for the party that is at the Center. The Congress (I) still have two and a half years left.

This election will be fought over the issue of "Construction vs. Destruction." This is what our party believes in. You can see it yourself. Moti Lal Vora did so much work during the presidential rule in Uttar Pradesh. The Center approved 12 billion rupees projects that were abandoned. The last two government there spent time in criticizing Delhi and stopped all the development projects. The BJP messed up even more. After seeing the depressed and unruly situation in the state, the investors stopped investing money there. Meanwhile, in Gujrat and Maharashtra (where they have Congress governments), the investors invested 250 billion rupees. Many non-resident Indians industrialists have assured us that they will establish industries in Uttar Pradesh when the Congress (I) establishes a stable government there. This will not only improve production and economy, but also reduce unemployment. If you want to see the developmental attitude of the Congress (I), you should take a look at the results of the presidential rule in the former BJP-controlled states. This has increased the people's faith in the Congress (I).

The BJP cannot survive on Rama's name alone. I ask: Is Lord Rama any one party's monopoly? He symbolizes everyone's faith. A shared issue is being exaggerated for no reason. How far will they push this issue? Why are they making their political hay in this sun while they know that this issue is being considered by the Supreme Court and the whole issue will be evaluated? The Congress (I) will obey the Supreme Court and the Constitution. It will accept whatever decision is made. These elections will tell the BJP how bored the people are with its temple issue. They know that the BJP is just after positions and is not interested in the temple decision. It is willing to let the poor fight the poor by exciting people's religious feelings.

In addition to Uttar Pradesh, our confrontation in Himachal, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh is also with factional parties like the BJP. In Himachal there are many issues like government employees strike and their anger at the BJP government, outrage of the apple traders, and development projects that will make the voters run towards the Congress (I). Now they can compare the BJP and the Congress (I) governments. Similarly, there are regional issues in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh and the veteran Congress leaders have a strong base there. The situation in Delhi will also get clear gradually. We can say that the moon of progress is in eclipse because of the religious factionalism and caste prejudice these days. This eclipse will pass soon. There are about 8,000 castes in our country and the Congress (I) does not belong to any one of these but all of them plus the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians here. Written by Sushil Rajesh.

We Shall Fight Over Five Issues—Karishan Lal Sharma, BJP.

Our party is contesting elections over five very important issues. First is to protest dismissal of four state governments over the Ayodhya issue. The myopia of the Center is clear from the way the four state governments were dismissed in an undemocratic manner. Such action using Ayodhya as an excuse is not appropriate. We know that the government did this for political reasons. We will also raise the question of abuse of Article 356. The second issue is of corruption at high levels as persons at high levels in the central government are corrupt. This came to the people's attention from the bank and public investment fraud cases. The third issue is ineffectiveness the Congress (I). The country is moving toward destruction because of the Congress (I) attitude. The central government has failed at every front. The government has pushed the country into debt in the name of economic independence. We believe that the people will not benefit from the World Bank loans that our country has taken. Instead, the nation is being burdened down by the wight of these loans. Our fourth

issue is security for the people. After the bomb blasts in Bombay and Delhi, the people are feeling insecure. After the bomb incident in Delhi's important area of Raisina Road, the truth about our security arrangements is out. The people in our country have begun to feel that this government cannot provide security for them. The fifth is issue is related to Kashmir. The government has been ambiguous about it. The government never formed a concrete policy about it. In addition, the issues that our party is using in these states, the Congress (I) is declaring those as its own achievements.

We believe that the situation has changed after the BJP governments were dismissed in the four states. However, this change will work for us. The people will have the opportunity to compare the two governments after our governments were dismissed. The people there know that the BJP governments have demonstrated its ability to perform better. That is why it was popular. All development projects were abandoned after the establishment of governors' rule.

It is true that there are some problems in the party over election tickets. It is unfortunate and our party will not tolerate such undisciplined attitude. I believe that every person is ambitious, and such conflicts are natural. However, our party is in much better position that is the Congress (I). We are confident of our victory because our party has achieved many important results. We have always kept our policy clear. Our governments in the states have proved this and they also made good their promises. What role the Ayodhya issue play in the election will be decided by the people. Our goal is to win the elections and establish a Ram [ideal] government in our country. Written by Kanchan Azad.

Opposed to Factional Dangers—Harikishan Singh Surjit, CPI (M).

The increasing religious factionalism in these vidhan sabha elections is a major issue for our party because the situation this has created has endangered the people's revolution. Therefore, our party has always tried to cooperate with the secular and democratic forces in the states for the elections. The second important issue is the economic policy. Narasimha Rao's government has mortgaged our country by borrowing money from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The people will have to bear the serious results of this action. Our party considers the corruption in our country the third issue. The prime minister has been accused of accepting bribe from Harshad Mehta. This has tarnished the central government's image. Most of the high officials in the central government are very corrupt and the people have suffer from that. The CPI (M) will raise this issue during the elections. However, the voters will make the final decision on it.

Our party's fourth issue is separatist elements in our country. The Congress government has failed in resolving the communal problems in Kashmir, Punjab and northern India. The short-sight of our government is evident from the way it dealt with the Ayodhya issue. The state governments are also running on God's faith. Similarly, the BJP state governments could not provide anything to the people during their rule. The BJP has lost its prestige because of the communal tension it caused in Uttar Pradesh.

The land reforms have not taken place in Madhya Pradesh even now. This is causing a lot of problems for the people there. In addition, there are many social issues. Our agriculture is still backward because of the lack of irrigation facilities. The farmers do not make enough profit from their investment in farming. The caste system is still rules the roost in the whole nation. We still way behind other developing countries. We are fighting poverty, unemployment, inflation, and terrorism. The situation of the minorities in our country is very serious. They feel insecure here. The religious policy of the Congress (I) has never been clear. Because of the irresponsible decisions of our government our country is moving toward the destructive separatism.

The minorities and backward groups in our country are very angry at the Congress (I) and the BJP. The anger of these minorities will affect the election results. In Uttar Pradesh, we have tried to get all left-wing parties to cooperate with the secular forces to make sure that the BJP does not win at any cost. We shall destroy the BJP dream of forming its government at the Center. Our party will keep the minorities informed about the separatist communal forces. Written by Kanchan Azad.

The Backward Classes Are With Us—Ajit Singh, Janata Dal.

The Janata Dal split for some reason, but now we are uniting again. if we look at our breach from historic perspective, we will find that our party is not like the others that were split even within the party. We had some differences and separated, however, we did not knock at anyone's door after breaking up. Now, our unity will be a positive act because we are the travellers of the route that Lohia and Charan Singh took. Even Mulayam Singh's vote bank in Uttar Pradesh is the same as of the Lok Dal. These voters are anti-Congress (I). The minorities are angry at Narasimha Rao. Therefore, Mulayam Singh may stay away from us, the people still will come to us. The disagreement should not be over chief minister's position. Our goal is to end communalism and provide ways and means for the proletariat to prosper. The doors of Janata Dal will always be open for Mulayam Singh, however.

The central region which includes Etawah, Kanpur, Lucknow, Agra, and Mainpuri is Mulayam Singh's influence region. Then again, his coalition [with Kanshi Ram] will not last long. Some backward classes are angry at Mulayam Singh because he had given the ticket to Kanshi Ram instead of Ram Singh Shakya in the last election. The backward classes have not forgotten that. These are all important issues which Mulayam Singh is ignoring.

We are running our candidates on 42 out of the 70 vidhan sabha seats in Delhi. No party will be able to form its government in Delhi on its own strength. Therefore, our

role will be decisive in forming any government. We are especially strong in outer Delhi and eastern Delhi because most of the residents here hail from western Uttar Pradesh and belong to backward classes. It is obvious that they will endorse us. Persons of our own philosophy will form their government in Uttar Pradesh. The process of issuing tickets is still going on in other states, therefore, it is too early to say any thing about them.

The Janata Dal will have the same issues in this election as Chowdhery Charan Singh and Lohia had fought for all their life. Partnership of laborers and farmers, employment, social justice, and clean government will be the main issues in our economic policy. In these elections, the polarization of social justice will be the most important issue.

The backward classes have neither any sympathy nor the vote for the BJP. The Janata Dal has a strong vote base in west Uttar Pradesh and the youth there. This vote bank was cut off from us during the Ram wave and is returning to us now. The Muslims will vote against the BJP as a whole. They will support any one that appears to be able to defeat the BJP. The BJP has the policy of maintaining the government of a special group and is using the Hindu-Muslim relationship as an excuse. Therefore, the farmers along with the minorities must raise their economic issues on the same stage. If they are prosperous, no separatist power can rule them. Most of the Muslims in Uttar Pradesh are farmers. Written by Brajnandan Singh.

We Shall Form Our Own Government—Mulayam Singh Yadav.

The main issue for these vidhan sabha elections is our national unity, of law and order, and of removing social inequities. Our goals are in front of our nation. We have published our election manifesto. We shall spend 70 percent of our budget on agriculture. Some other parties just do not have any goal or issue and they are playing with people's emotions. Since they have no issues, they will make the temple an issue in the end. However, the people of this country will not be deceived again and again. The people have learned the truth about them. They talk about corruption now and about a clean government right after that. At the end, there is the temple!

The Janata Dal is out of the fight in Uttar Pradesh. The backward classes and the Muslims cannot be deceived. The Janata Dal has been unmasked to the people. I am fighting the BJP non-stop and the Janata Dal is fighting with me. The Janata Dal is attacking on me and mocking my status. Do not the backward classes and the Muslims understand all this? The Janata Dal is out of the competition in Uttar Pradesh.

We party's election announcement has declared that we will not tolerate the present situation in Ayodhya in which one side feels it won and the other side feels that it has lost. At present, one side feels defeated. We will talk with both sides and find a way so that both sides leave with respect.

The nation is at risk of dividing because of the BJP and the Congress (I). Our policy, principles, and plan are all clear. Our perspective is positive. Support for our coalition is gradually increasing. We will contest with the BJP and will be in the position to form government on our own. The people understand now that our country has lost a lot by being emotional. It has lost lives, property, and wealth. No attention was given to problems the people were facing. We got stuck with the issues of temple and mosques. We shall not only change the government, but also the form of government. I had two talks with Lalu Yadav about unity of the Janata family. All this was talk for the sake of talk. The announcement for elections has been made and the question of an agreement at this time does not arise. Both of us understand that we have to defeat the BJP. We should attack the BJP and not develop bitterness with each other. We are fighting honestly with the BJP and they [the Janata Dal] are fighting with us. How will all this work?

The Muslims know who defended their mosque and who tore it down. The Samajwadi Party does not practice politics of religion. We fight against injustice. The Muslims understand where their interests are protected. They cannot be fooled by rhetoric.

The temple issue has involved backward groups also. The Kalyan Singh government caused problems mostly for the backward groups. Those who thought it was their own government suffered most. Let us take the Muslim businessmen. They lost more than all others. The backward classes have understood that the BJP is the party of the same ruling class that was with the Congress until recently.

Those who are propagating that the SP wants to give protection to criminals and lawbreakers, should read the sentence in our manifesto in which we have written clearly that those who extort money will have to leave Uttar Pradesh. We want to end these three laws. Dr. Lohia and Mahatma Gandhi had also objected to such laws. The other laws can deal with the criminals and malefactors. These laws are used for persecuting politicians. We will not permit that. We want to have a debate on this issue. That is why we have included it in our manifesto. During the last two years, these laws were mostly used against our people. Written by Hemant Sharma.

• Analyst Sees No Surge Towards One Party Victory

94AS0066A New Delhi JANSATTA (Supplement) in Hindi 24 Oct 93 p I

[Article by Prabhash Joshi: "No Wind, No Wave"]

[Text] No one can see a wave. Be it Madhya Pradesh in the valley of Vindhya mountains or Himachal in the Himalayas or be it Gorakhpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh or Jaisalmer in western Rajasthan, even the city of Delhi that is busy in politics round the clock is not getting excited about this mini election. Is the reason for this apathy all these elections that take place in between regular elections? Have the people decided that it is useless to get excited if a cobra sits in the place of a snake. If there is an election, they will just go and vote.

Forget the wave. It would be the BJP leaders who would be upset because there is not even any wind. They believe that reckless and crazy kar sevaks who had torn down the Babri

Masjid on 6 December have paved the way for them to rule in Delhi. Their opponents also have the fear that the BJP will win if there is an election now. All the parties had the fear that V.P. Singh was going to get strong support from backward castes in June 1991 after the Mandal announcement. However, when the results came in, half of his wind was gone. The BJP also knew by March that the destruction of the mosque had only gotten support of the Hindus who were with it from the beginning or whose nationalism was defined by being anti-Muslim. The election cannot be won with their support alone.

Therefore, the BJP searched for such issues in its Calcutta and Bangalore conventions which could help it give a stronger base. In Bangalore, it got the affair of Harshad Mehta giving 10 million rupees to Narasimha Rao. However, after throwing it around it learned that this issue cannot keep the election horizon covered. Then came the issue of separating religion from politics. However, this can have an appeal for only those believe in only an organized religion. Such people were already with the BJP. Therefore, the janadesh yatras [people's mandate pilgrimages] did not get the kind of zealous support as was received by the rath yatra [chariot ride] during the Rama wave. The BJP had to return again to the Ayodhya issue and had to say that it tore down the mosque or let it be torn down. The BJP is asking for votes on an issue which had already helped form a part of its vote bank.

The Congress (I) which was in a predicament all the year is very content because the BJP could not make any wind blow. It also know that if it was not suffering from internal strife and if it was not so disorganized in northern India, it would have had a chance now. It is not climbing down into the old arena and challenge other people because it is not sure if it can unite for this fight. All it is doing is trying to arrange its chips. It is helping any person or party that can defeat the BJP. It will check where a non-BJP government can be formed after the election. It is also trying to force the BJP to be identified as a party that tore down the mosque and not the one that wants the temple rebuilt so that the liberal Hindu vote does not returns to it. It is alert to make sure that the BJP does not get an issue that incites the Hindu emotions.

Mulayam Singh is also very careful because his opposition to V.P. Singh and BJP had created a situation in 1990 that had benefitted the BJP. He has his eyes on the Muslim vote, however, he is also publicly mocking Imam Bukhari and other fundamentalist leaders. His associate Kanshi Ram is also not letting the Muslims get into a position to give orders. Instead, he is cursing their leaders to show that he is not willing to appease the Muslims. Mulayam Singh is uniting the backward classes and the Dalits to make sure that the BJP does not steal from his vote bank in the name of religion. This is his lesson from 1990.

The situation is changing in such a way that it will be difficult for the BJP to win election even in two or three states. If it does not win in the four states, the whole nation will get the message that the BJP cannot establish the government in Delhi. The failure of its major issue and Rama's not helping it establishing the government will disappoint it. Since it has only one issue, it will not leave any stone unturned to incite religious emotions.

Thus, it does not matter how much one talks about issues, a lot of effort will be put in to divide the society into factions. In response, the fire of caste fanaticism will be fanned. The Congress (I) will try to have all those who are tired of this vote for it. Therefore, it is making non-religious and non-caste based progress the election issue. The left-wing parties are marginal here.

These mini elections in the four north Indian states can give a decisive direction to our nation's political future. Therefore, let us be careful!

* Mood of Electorate Gaged, Scenario Seen Unclear

94AS0068K New Delhi INDIA TODAY in English 31 Oct 93 pp 72-77

[Article by Dilip Awasthi and Zafar Agha: "Treading Warily"]

[Text] The people of Lucknow have been treated to numerous rallies in the past few weeks. The first show was by Mulayam Singh Yadav who set the tone with a huge rally, followed soon after by Kanshi Ram of the BSP [Bahujan Samaj Party] and then most recently by Narasimha Rao who was brought in to kick off the Congress(I) campaign. Rallies are rallies. But this time there is a difference. All the players know that the success of these rallies is not as significant as it was in the past. They have realised that this election will be solidly issue-based since there is no emotional wave over the Ram temple or over Mandal.

Indeed, it is this realisation which has finally given some heart to the Congress(I). Rao's rally was significant because it showed that the party was finally showing signs of being able to tackle its foremost task: to prove to the electorate that it possesses the will and can summon the energy to reclaim this Hindi heartland state.

The categorical imperative facing the Congress(I) is not to win a majority (which it knows is unlikely) but to give a creditable performance so that in the next general elections, it can stand up and be counted as a force to be reckoned with rather than be remembered as a loser who limped off the field with his tail between his legs, leaving the field clear for the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party]. The danger which many Congressmen feared—and perhaps still do—was that the party would allow itself to be intimidated by the BJP's confidence before the battle had even begun, sending out disastrous signals to its rivals and to the country.

In other words, the party's political credibility with the voters is at stake. Congressmen feel much easier now since they sense that the battle for votes will revolve around issues instead of the BJP setting the agenda as it did the last time. Rao's personal credibility, of course, is also at stake. Here is a man who keeps promising to protect the Muslims and yet all he has to show for himself is a list of blunders. Even his latest gesture to assuage Muslim hurt over the demolition—the issuing of a chargesheet (see box)

against top BJP-Vishwa Hindu Parisahd (vernacular)] leaders—left the BJP unruffled and proved to be too little too late.

This is why the Congress(I) was reasonably satisfied with the Lucknow rally. What it told them was that, despite the fact that Rao failed to give party workers any clear line to take over the Ram temple, the party was nevertheless developing a healthy appetite for a fight.

THE BJP

In Need of a New Rallying Cry

One consolation for the Congress(I) is that the BJP is groping around desperately, knowing it's a now-or-never situation in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP knows that if it captures power again in this state, its fortunes will be rosy elsewhere. Indeed, even the BJP's rivals are spending more time talking about the party's prospects than about their own for the simple reason that only the BJP might end up in a position to form a government on its own. All the others can hope for is to be part of a coalition of some kind.

The BJP's dilemma is that the issues which were so successful as vote-winners in 1991 have lost a lot of their purchasing power—the lure of Hindutva, the demonisation of Mulayam Singh Yadav as the man who killed kar sevaks, the anti-Mandal agitation and the appeal of the *Sabko dekha baar baar, humko dekho ek baar* (You have tried everybody else, give us a chance this time) slogan.

The demolition has deflated the whole mandir issue. Rao's indecision over rebuilding the masjid has not made him as convenient a whipping boy as Mulayam Singh, and despite the implementation of the Mandal Commission report, the upper caste don't seem unduly perturbed. Finally, the BJP had indeed had a chance to rule the state and did not do better than anyone else. Hardly surprising, then, that only Ram is left as a selling point.

An analysis of the BJP's remarkable victory in the 1991 polls shows that it did exceptionally well where Muslims were dominant. The success rate of its candidates ranged from 39.1 per cent in central Uttar Pradesh to 68 per cent in the Rohilkhand region and 79 per cent in the Hills. The big chunks of seats came from Rohilkhand (33 of the total of 50 seats), 83 of the 159 seats from eastern Uttar Pradesh and 40 of the 101 seats from the western part. Most came from areas which had a Muslim population ranging from 20 to 60 per cent.

THE JANATA DAL

Is There Life After Mandal?

The challenge facing the re-united Janata Dal is that V.P. Singh and his brethren have washed so much dirty linen in public so often that it will take a considerable effort to undo the damage. Indeed, most of its leaders are staying away from Lucknow and big city rallies, preferring to concentrate on the interior which requires much less money. As for trying to work out how to whip up passions over Mandal, the party has not made much progress. The start of its campaign is also delayed because the party has been too busy sorting out its re-unification.

The Janata Dal will be concentrating its efforts in eastern, central and western Uttar Pradesh which gave it a majority of its seats in 1991. Of its total of 91 seats, 39 were from the east, 33 from the west and 11 from central Uttar Pradesh. The party is relying on Ajit Singh's strongholds in the west and V.P. Singh's appeal amongst the OBC's [expansion not given] in the east.

On the matter of softening Mulayam Singh's refusal to join it, the Janata Dal has made no headway. Bihar's Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav met Mulayam Singh Yadav in Delhi last fortnight in an attempt to win him over but Mulayam was unconvinced: "There's no question of it. My only ally is Kanshi Ram." He is confident about shunning any alliance with the Janata Dal because in any division of votes, he will be the beneficiary. Whereas some of his own votes may end up going to V.P. Singh, he in turn can hope for a split in the upper caste vote amongst the BJP and the Congress(I). And if he can prove his mettle in Uttar Pradesh, he hopes to emerge as an answer to the BJP on the national scene.

The Janata Dal is likely to improve on its 1991 performance only if voters decide against the Mulayam Singh-Kanshi Ram alliance but so far the combination looks strong. The two men plan to contest around 400 seats and inside reports say they have also resolved the prickly matter of who is to fight which seat. It seems Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi Party will contest 260 seats while the BSP will fight 140 seats.

THE MUSLIMS

Wooing With Kid Gloves

Muslims comprise between 10 and 40 per cent of the voting population in most districts of Uttar Pradesh, sufficient to make any party want to have them on its side. This has indeed been the case in all previous elections, but today, the state's Muslims are a confused lot. Accustomed to being courted ardently, and visibly, in every election by all parties barring the BJP, their support is being sought almost furtively this time.

Even the president of the traditionally pro-minority Congress(I), P.V. Narasimha Rao, touches on the reconstruction of the Babri Musjid in Ayodhya only after he outlines his government's plans to build a Ram temple there. V.P. Singh speaks of protection of the Muslims after pointing out the "universal appeal" of Lord Ram. And the party manifesto of the erstwhile self-appointed defender of the Babri Masjid, Mulayam Singh Yadav, is deliberately vague on Ayodhya: "We will find a solution which will not let any side feel let down or defeated." Moreover, the manifesto promises protection of the rights of Muslims, but clubs them in the same section as the Harijans and backwards.

The reasons for this change of approach can be found in the results of previous elections. The emergence of the BJP and the raking up of the Ram Janmabhoomi issue have spelt bad news for the Muslims in the state. The first reverse occurred in the 1985 Vidhan Sabha polls when the number of Muslim MLAs [Member of Legislative Assembly] dipped from 89 to 52. In 1989, out of 254 Muslim candidates, only 41 won. In 1991, their number

dropped further—out of 242 candidates, a mere 23 succeeded. Their share of the votes fell too, from 11.28 per cent in 1989 to 9.61 per cent in 1991.

A region-by-region analysis of the last two elections presents an even gloomier scenario for the Muslims. Traditionally, the Rohilkhand (50 seats), central Uttar Pradesh (75 seats), west Uttar Pradesh (101 seats) and parts of east Uttar Pradesh (159 seats) have been the regions which offered maximum support to Muslim candidates.

But in 1991, the number of Muslim MLAs from Rohilkhand dropped from 11 to six, and their share of votes from 25.23 per cent to 20.9 per cent. Central Uttar Pradesh returned five Muslim MLAs in 1991 against the previous seven, with 3.12 per cent fewer votes. In west Uttar Pradesh, only three Muslim candidates won as against eight in 1989. Their share of votes too dropped by 3.22 per cent.

Clearly, not an encouraging signal for either V.P. Singh or Mulayam Singh Yadav, both of whom were trying to outdo each other in fielding Muslim candidates last time. After the BJP embarked on its mission to consolidate the Hindu vote, attempts to corner the Muslim vote en bloc have backfired, leading instead to a polarisation of the Hindu vote. The more a party moved towards the Muslims, the more it alienated the Hindu voters. And in a state like Uttar Pradesh, where the Ayodhya issue proved powerful enough to unite the hitherto fragmented Hindu vote, the potential damage a pro-Muslim image could cause now outweighs the benefits of outright Muslim support.

This comes across with telling effect in, ironically enough, constituencies where Muslims form a significant percentage of the electorate. In 170 assembly constituencies where Muslims number over 20 per cent, the BJP won nearly 80 per cent of the seats last time. The Muslims in these constituencies were courted as a vote bank, and voted accordingly, leading to a massive backlash from Hindu voters there. The polarisation of votes was complete. The secular parties, if they appeal for Muslim votes this time, will therefore have to do so without seeming to court them.

That the centrist parties have grasped this message is all too evident this year. Traditionally, and especially under the Congress(I) regimes, the pre-election scene has been dominated by package deals for weavers and artisans, a majority of whom are Muslims. These sops are missing altogether now.

Interestingly, the BJP is attempting a token reconciliation of sorts with the Muslims. But the claim of the party Minority Morcha's state president Tanveer Haider Usmani rings as hollow as the party's bid to mend fences with the Muslims: "Everybody will be shocked when the real strength of Muslims with our party unfolds in the course of this election." However, this effort, under the leadership of the much-despised Aijaz Rizvi, a former BJP minister, is likely to hinder rather than help the party.

For the state's Muslims, very few of whom are likely to be swayed by the BJP's change of heart, this election does not present many choices. They are still a force to be reckoned with, comprising 1.40 crore of the 7.50 crore-strong electorate. As a bloc, they are the third largest, only behind the OBCs and the SC/STs [expansion not given]. Even if V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav both shift their attentions to OBCs, and the BJP and the Congress(I) to upper caste Hindus, none of them can leave out the Muslims altogether from its electoral calculations.

But with most political parties likely to be extremely cautious about fielding Muslim candidates—owing to what they label "tactical limitations" in off-the-record comments—the only way out for Muslim voters could be to look beyond their own community for their representatives. In a major departure from previous elections, Muslim voters still haven't made up their minds on which party to support. But they can take comfort in the fact that although their traditional dependents are not asking for their votes this time, the parties nevertheless need their continued backing, as they are too important to be ignored completely.

Breaking the Mould

Next month's assembly elections to the four former BJP-ruled states and Delhi are bound to have a significant bearing not only on the overall political scenario, but also on the future course of Muslim politics. Though the Muslim vote has always played a role in determining the fortunes of political parties, especially in Uttar Pradesh, its role and the nature of its support have undergone a tremendous change.

The BJP has shown the secular parties that it is no longer feasible to pursue a pronounced pro-Muslim strategy, as it only provokes a polarisation of Hindu votes from which it benefits. And that a Muslim vote bank can only be effective in conjunction with other social groups.

Even as this realisation has prompted secular parties to revise their strategy, Muslim voters too are considering options other than voting en bloc. It has also led them to question their community leaders. The feeling is that their policy of brinkmanship and high-pitched communal politics has only harmed the community by strengthening the BJP's influence among Hindus.

The demolition of the Babri Masjid was a watershed in Muslim politics. It showed up the Muslim leadership as rank opportunists intent on feathering their own nests, by keeping the community occupied with communal issues. "They tried to match the Hindu zealots in trying to raise the communal temperature, but when the denouncement came, they were nowhere to be found," says N.S. Waziri, a Delhi High Court lawyer.

Nowhere is the mood of disillusionment more apparent than in the decline of the influence wielded by the Shahi Imam of the Delhi Jama Masjid, Syed Abdullah Bukhari. As more Muslims have been trying to break out of a ghetto mentality and, in the process, have ceased to react as a "monolith," the Imam and his penchant for *fatwas* have tended to fade in significance. According to Shahid Siddiqui, editor of the Urdu weekly NAI DUNIYA:

"Bukhari is a creation of the media and does not wield an iota of the influence he would have one believe." Adds script-writer Javed Akhtar: "The Imam is not our political arbiter, but every time he opens his mouth he gives the BJP a few more seats."

Rather than allow a few power brokers to decide their political options, many Muslim organisations are now urging Muslims to broadbase their support. But that's not easy either. The community had already cast its lot with the Janata Dal in 1989, and then with V.P. Singh in 1991, without any tangible gains. Although Narasimha Rao still evokes hostility, the attitude towards the Congress(I) is now softening. Being the largest party in the country, it's seen as their best bet to defeat the BJP.

Only the Muslim leadership is still clinging stubbornly to its old ways. Driven to desperation by the increasing alienation of the Muslim masses, the leadership is still adopting extreme postures, which provoked the alienation in the first place. A classic example is the recent move of the Muslim Personal Law Board to constitute Islamic Shariat courts at district level.

Unless Muslim leaders are willing to change with the times, they could well be left out of the future Muslim voter's scheme of things.

BJP-Congress (I) Showdown

* BJP Said Benefitting From Renewed Anti-Congress Sentiment

93LA0190J Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 12 Aug 93 p 4

[Article by Sandarshan Thakur & Pranay Sharma: "Opposition Anti-Congressism Boon to BJP"]

[Text] New Delhi, Aug 11—The BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] appears to be relishing the Left Front-National Front combine's growing anti-Congressism which manifested itself best during the introduction of the Bill delinking religion from politics in Parliament.

Contrary to expectations, the Bill did not see a BJP versus the rest situation in the Lok Sabha. Rather, it was more like the continuation of the no-confidence motion with the Congress which still faced adversaries on all sides.

The religion Bill, by its very nature, was expected to create a divide between the BJP and the other political parties. But the manner in which the Left and National Front—particularly leaders like Mr George Fernandes—responded to it, left the impression that they were keen on battling against the government rather than help curb communal politics.

Admittedly, the Left and Front leaders failed to make the distinction clear that they were objecting to certain portions of the Bill and not to the immediate motive behind it. But the impression that has gone around is that even as far as the religion Bill is concerned, they stand opposed to the government. This is a situation the BJP would gleefully like to exploit.

The religion Bill has not been the only instance since the no-confidence motion on which the National Front-Left parties have appeared to close ranks with the BJP to pin the government down. The latest has been the uproar over the controversial role of the Chief Election Commissioner Mr T.N. Seshan. Even though the group was keen on seeking Mr Seshan's impeachment (it had already submitted two notices on this during earlier sessions of Parliament), it did not press the point to demarcate its position from that of the BJP's, which was to avoid impeachment proceedings.

Then again, the pattern of the debate in Parliament on the blast at the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] headquarters in Madras fell on the Congress-anti-Congress lines. Much to the consternation of many, the Left and National Front members joined the BJP to put the government on the mat for its failure to prevent the attack.

The entire Opposition also rallied behind the BJP leader, Mr Sikandar Bakht's demand that a CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] probe be instituted into the Madras blast. Mr. Gurudas Dasgupta of the CPI, and Mr M. Afzal of the Janata Dal, went to the extent of questioning the government's intentions. Charging the government with maintaining double-standards, the two pointed out that while the Center had forced a CBI probe on the Maharashtra government despite the Chief Minister Mr Sharad Pawar's opposition to it, in the case of Madras, the Center was reluctant even though the state government had sought a CBI inquiry.

The BJP, too, has been doing its bit to bolster the anti-Congress mood, even to the extent of speaking on behalf of the Left Front government in West Bengal. The Calcutta-based BJP MP, Dr Vishnukant Shastri, who is an inveterate Left-baiter, sprang to the defense of the Left Front government during a discussion on the attack on the Mamata Banerjee-led demonstration at Writers' Buildings. In what must have come to the Left as a pleasant surprise, Dr Shastri said, "Though we have differences with the Left Front government, Ms Banerjee should not have provoked the police firing."

In the case of the murder of the Teluga Desam MLA, P. Siva Reddy, the BJP again joined ranks with the Opposition to bully the government. Ms Renuka Chaudhury's plea that the Center should not rely on the state government's information, since it was a "party" to it, was loudly supported by Mr J. P. Mathur and Mr Sikandar Bakht of the BJP.

On several of these issues, the non-BJP Opposition could well have distanced itself from the BJP's position even while maintaining an anti-government stand. On the religion Bill, for instance, the Front-Left combine could have made it clear that they strongly support the delinking of politics and religion and were worried only about certain portions of the Bill. They failed to articulate this distinction and the impression that went from the floor of Parliament was that they too stood opposed to the provisions of the Bill.

The non-BJP parties seem to have realized that, wittingly or unwittingly, they have been acting as instruments of the BJP, especially where the religion Bill is concerned. They, therefore, started rethinking and felt the need to review the contentious Bill afresh and suggest amendments to the Center.

But how dexterously will they be able to keep their position from that of the BJP's while still opposing the government is not clear.

* Congress, BJP Battle Termed 'Do-or-Die' Struggle

94AS0045A Cochin THE WEEK in English
5 Sep 93 pp 28-29

[Article by Vijaya Puhkarna and R. Prasannan: "Quiver Without Arrows"]

[Text] The battle for the heartland has begun, even before it has been declared. As the stormy monsoon session of Parliament came to a close, the party elders were still groping for strategies to wage the crucial elections to the four assemblies which were dismissed last December.

The parties know full well that the polls are not going to be just a fight to decide who rules Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, where President's rule comes to an end in November. It will not even be a referendum on Ayodhya. Rather, it will be a fight to decide who would rule India.

The BJP, whose governments were dismissed in the four states nine months ago, sees it as its chance to force the delicately balanced Congress along with the Ram Lakhans and the Mundas into yet another mid-term Lok Sabha election. The Congress sees the threat and much beyond. It realises that this poll will decide whether its middle-of-the-road line has any relevance in today's polarised politics. If the light is between these two parties in three states, the much splintered Janata Dal is fighting for dear life in Uttar Pradesh.

The elections are going to be a two-front battle for Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. First, he will have to ensure his party's victory in the states—a tall order. Second, he would have to ensure his own survival, which again is no mean task. For his ambitious rival Arjun Singh, this would be the best chance to establish his supremacy. For Janata Dal's V.P. Singh, this is, perhaps, his last chance to vindicate his politics of the underdog. For BJP's Lal Krishna Advani, this poll would decide whether Hindutva alone could be the political agenda.

The BJP seems to have made up its mind about forcing a mid-term general election. Yet no party is clear on its strategy. In nine months the Congress has done little to gain back its support base. "Only a miracle—of alliances—can save us in UP," says a Congress MP. "But we have a fighting chance in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan." That is perhaps why Arjun Singh, who considers Madhya Pradesh has fiefdom, avoided a direct confrontation with Rao on the eve of the adjournment of the monsoon session. His men had given notice to speak at the parliamentary party meeting. Singh was peeved by the nasty reception he got at Kurukshetra in Bhajan Lal's Haryana (he was hooted down by partymen allegedly sent by Bhajan Lal). But once again kingmaker K. Karunakaran of Kerala managed a midnight meeting between Singh and Rao. There was no patch-up but Singh got what he wanted—a free hand in fighting the Congress battle in Madhya Pradesh.

Singh had scaled down his original plan of making the Congress accept his very own bash-BJP line. He is already making his moves anticipating the post-election scenario. If the party makes a good showing in Madhya Pradesh and does badly in the other states, he would need no further proof to what he has been saying all along—that the party leadership is lethargic. And he would have Madhya Pradesh to show what good a little bit of aggressive anti-communalism can do.

In fact, the AICC leaders believe that this was all what Singh wanted. "Do you think anyone would like to take up the responsibility of campaign in UP now," asks a CWC member. Yet, he denied that his party lacked a sure-fire strategy: "It is the BJP that is groping for a strategy. They have invited people to suggest ideas for their manifesto." But when asked what the Congress strategy was, he could only mumble, "it is being given the final touches."

Yet for all that, his party's reasoning is that a large section of voters who think that the demolition of the Babri Masjid was wrong do not want the problem to start afresh by a re-building of the mosque. They would think twice before voting the BJP and would be comfortable with the less obscurantist face of the Congress. And if Arjun Singh could bring in the minority vote, all the better for the party.

But gearing up to upset Arjun Singh's apple cart in Madhya Pradesh is chief ministerial aspirant Shyama Charan Shukla, who has told the high command that he cannot accept Singh's diktats. Similar group wranglings persist in other states too. In UP, the Congress is divided on caste lines with the Brahmin lobby headed by N.D. Tiwari working independently of party president Mahabir Prasad. But party spokesman Chandulal Chandrakar says: "Group fights have been there in the party all along and we have won elections with that."

Congress party strategists are hard at work—feelers have been sent to the Bahujan Samaj Party in Madhya Pradesh. The BSP can take away chunks of scheduled caste and tribal votes from the Congress. The Arjun Singh group wants an understanding with the Janata Dal and leftists in UP. But AICC elders believe that an alliance with the discredited party would erode the little Hindu support it has there. Having written off the Muslim vote, the party should garner the 'soft Hindu' vote, so goes the argument.

Whether their calculations work out or not, the Congress and the BJP realise that poor electoral arithmetic cannot be an alibi for defeat. For now, both parties are equally confused about their strategies and priorities of issue. And plagued with too many candidates not just scrambling for tickets but also to project themselves as future chief ministers.

"Corruption is going to be the main issue. We shall take up the Ramaswamy affair, the disinvestments from public sector units, the one-crore pay off to the PM and the failure of Rao's government," says BJP spokesperson Sushma Swaraj. Vice-president O. Rajagopal is emphatic that his party would seek the people's verdict on Ayodhya. General secretary Kishen Lal Sharma airs yet another point of view: "We will contest the polls mainly on the plank of comparative performance."

Sharma gives only a third place to Ayodhya. The second issue, he says, is the betrayal of the people's will. "If the verdict in all the four states is in our favour, we will interpret it as endorsement for the construction of a temple," he says.

Sushma Swaraj is categorical that no leader would be projected as chief minister in the run-up phase. However, Rajagopal concedes that there was no way of checking anyone from presenting himself as the future chief minister.

Stories about squabbles between RSS and non-RSS lobbies was old hat, says Sharma. In any case, according to Sushma Swaraj, the role of the RSS and the VHP would be purely advisory. The leaders do not see any tension in the four states on account of new entrants from other parties, particularly the Janata Dal.

The BJP's manifesto committees and the election cells are sorting out applications. Instructions have been sent to them to finalise the selections by September 30 so that the national executive can clear them at its Lucknow meeting in October.

"There will be a realignment of political forces. The Congress will either be divided or find it difficult to carry on and it will be forced to go in for a mid-term poll, which is what we want," says Sushma Swaraj.

But what if there is a reversal? For now, the BJP like its rivals are not even willing to consider that. It is a do-or-die battle for the heartland.

*** BJP Challenge to Congress (I) Viewed**

*** Rao Providing Ammunition**

93LA0228A Varanasi AJ in Hindi 6 Sep 93 p 6

[Article by Shashi Shekhar: "A BJP Feast on Rao's Plate"]

[Text] The Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] should be thankful to Narasimha Rao, who is pushing the nation toward Hastinapur [Ancient kingdom near Ayodhya]. Before the November election to be held in four states, Mr. Rao has given the BJP the opportunity to cash in 50 paise as one rupee in the Indian political market. Is it a lack of political savvy or intellectual deprivation on the part of Mr. Rao in his old age, that made him promise to take legal action against the people responsible for destroying the disputed structure last 6 December in Ayodhya?

And at what time is this promise being made? At a time when the BJP is declaring that it would carry out janadesh yatras' [public awakening journey] in various parts of the country. It is not a hidden fact that the BJP has picked this time especially for these awareness trips. It is obvious that the BJP leaders will once again try to create an appropriate and warm atmosphere for the party, just as Mr. Advani's famous chariot trip had helped them. This time, the BJP has collected much more support than it had before. The purpose of four top leaders, to travel over 3,000 kilometers on the road, makes it clear that wherever they go, they will try to explain to the people the stand of this party, which is considered to be communal, and that it has no plan to harm the country and the society. It is not a coincidence that Mr. Rao has given them this opportunity to take these awareness trips. The main purpose of these trips is religion-related legislation. How this controversial legislation was to be introduced into Parliament, and how government leaders in New Delhi had to suffer embarrassment over it, does not have to be explained here.

The embarrassment that the Congress Party has to face over the religion-related amendment has really disappointed the average member of the Congress Party. The BJP definitely has the best opportunity to reap the double benefits. If frustration is spread in the political enemy's camp, then this can be the best opportunity to return and attack back. The BJP, according to its old habit of taking advantage of any opportunity, has declared that it will start people's awareness trips. We do not understand why, just before these trips were started, Rao took the risk of introducing the charge sheet over the Ayodhya issue. If he thinks that he will be able to win the minorities with this action, then he must be suffering from self-delusion. This is not a very old incident that we can forget. At that time, Mr. V.P. Singh, the political actor, was reigning over his Delhi throne. He tried to give stability to the Janata Dal government by combining Dalits, backward classes, and minorities. There are no two opinions about the fact that, compared to Rao, he is much more expert in creating a facade of sand castles through misleading rhetoric. What happened to their sandy promises and crocodile tears?

The BJP has emerged as a much more powerful party than it was before. The slogans of Dalits, backward classes, and Muslim unity have become useless. Advani's chariot trip started in Ahmedabad at a time of confusion, and indecisiveness had become historic. None of the trips during the long history of India's independence influenced the people as much. At that time, analysts said that the time of Muslim pacification had left this country. V.P. Singh was unsuccessful because he could not read the pulse of the time accurately. The BJP was successful because it somehow was able to assure Hindus that, after the Congress Party, V.P. Singh is even more dangerous to Indian society, because of his policy of pacification. In elections, emotions play a more important role than logic. The BJP started a typhoon of emotions and succeeded in its goals. Its success in the election has proved this.

Narasimha Rao should try to understand the BJP strategy fully. We do not know, however, what he was hearing or thinking. After the decision to start public awareness trips, starting to talk about introducing the charge sheet would benefit no one else but the BJP. What will this charge sheet

contain? One does not have to be a genius to understand this. Certainly, the major leaders of the BJP, RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh], VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad], and Shiv Sena, who were present in Ayodhya that day, will be included in this list. Many people can be included in the conspiracy to tear down the disputed structure. After the introduction of this charge sheet, the people found to be guilty in the eyes of the CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] will be arrested. What will be the effect of these arrests? It is not necessary to tell this to anyone. Rao can remember that after the Emergency, the people's mandate was against his former boss, Indira Gandhi. The whole atmosphere was against her. Morarji Desai's return to power was considered equivalent to the return of democracy. Efforts were made on every side to declare Mrs. Gandhi the villain. The whole atmosphere was against Mrs. Gandhi; however, in less than two years, she was back in power.

How did it happen? This was the result of a minor mistake made by then-Home Minister Chowdhary Charan Singh. Before the decision of the Shah Commission, and based on the initial investigation of the police, he ordered the arrest of Indira Gandhi. She was in police custody for only a few hours; however, this minor incident made it look like a Himalaya-sized mistake by the Janata government. This incident helped prepare a major wave of sympathy for her in the whole country. It was believed that Mrs. Gandhi's arrest was not a legal process, but the result of immoral and selfish feelings of revenge. That is why the fate of the Janata Party was drowned in the ocean. This example has become old. Rao can use the example of Advani's arrest during the Janata Dal government. How nationwide demonstrations were started at his arrest in Samastipur. The surprising fact is that Rao has not only given the BJP an opportunity to emerge but also prepared atmosphere conducive to its taking advantage in the election chess game.

That is why the BJP has accepted this challenge in a beautiful manner. Mr. Kalyan Singh, chief minister of Uttar Pradesh at the time the temple was destroyed, is declaring that he would very gladly be willing to kiss the hangman's noose for the sake of Rama. Mr. Lal Krishna Advani, the BJP president, is calling it Congress' wrong policy. It is obvious that the leaders of the public awareness trips starting on 11 September will like this topic very much. Mr. Rao, knowingly or unknowingly, has once again tried to uproot the Congress Party in Hindi-speaking states. It is a foregone conclusion that the minority will consider it pure drama, and the environment will be conducive to encouraging Hindu fundamentalism again. The Congress will be hurt from both sides, while the BJP will benefit from all sides.

Supporters of Rao are arguing that they did not work against any party or group. They say that they did not do this to hurt anybody's interests. They are doing all this to protect the law. However, this much abused logic does not need any new facts to make it look ineffective. The BJP will be able to do its job using the old arguments, and has already started doing it. Mr. Advani has reacted strongly to Mr. Rao's statement, asking how Rao can talk about punishing the Ayodhya criminals. Riots took place ten years ago, and the Congress Party has not yet punished the people responsible. The anger that erupted after Indira Gandhi's assassination resulted in the deaths of 3,000 innocent people. In this context, the report submitted by the Legal Investigation Commission was also put on the back burner. Now, if the Congress is talking about punishing the people involved in the Ayodhya incident, then this is nothing but a policy of double standard.

The BJP also argued that the government is not very eloquent about the bomb blasts in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, and if it is talking about law and order, then why did it not arrest Imam Bukhari? Various courts in the country have indicated that the police should arrest him and present him in court. Is the law different for the imam than it is for the Hindu leaders? They are digging many old graves and can say that the policy of Muslim pacification was so strong that the Congress Party even changed the law over the Shah Bano case. It issued orders to ban Salman Rushdie's book without even reading it. Then why is it attacking the Ayodhya culprits? It is obvious that these facts will help the BJP, and that Congress will not be able to respond to these allegations solidly, just as it did in the past.

Mr. Rao has definitely taken this political step at the wrong time. Does anybody serve food for other people on his own plate?

• BJP Seeks Poll Debate With Congress on Basic Issues

94AS0003P Bangalore DECCAN HERALD in English 22 Sep 93 p 7

[Text] New Delhi, 21 Sep (UNI)—The Bharatiya Janata Party today challenged the Congress(I) and other political parties to come "forward for a debate on basic issues" ahead of Assembly elections in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. "Let the issues be the performance, secularism and national integration and unity as announced by Congress(I) campaign committee in charge and Commerce Minister Pranab Mukherjee," BJP spokesman K.L. Sharma said today. The BJP would like to add one more issue—a proposed bill seeking to delink religion from politics—he said. "The venue of the debate can be all India Radio, Doordashan or any other common platform. It will be a healthy beginning for having a debate on political level before the elections in the four states are held," he said. The BJP accused the Congress(I) of initiating an "Imam oriented election—as if the Imam was calling the shots—the Imam is asking political parties to join forces against BJP", he said. Political parties must spell out their positions on Ayodhya and "no political party could evade" clearly stating its position in the coming elections, he argued.

Doordarshan

The BJP accused Doordarshan of "deliberately blacking out BJP news" and threatened to launch an agitation against it if the practice continued. Mr Sharma said Doordarshan "must change its attitude and should be balanced and give every political party proportionate

coverage". Doordarshan would be put to test by the coverage it would give to a Youth Congress rally to be addressed by Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao next September 24 and a BJP rally the following day, which would be addressed by all BJP bigwigs, including the former chief ministers of the four states. He suggested that Mr K.P. Singh Deo, the Information and Broadcasting Minister, come out with a code of conduct for the coverage of elections.

* Congress Said Unable to Capitalize on BJP Downswing

94AS0046M Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 8 Oct 93 p 10

[Text] New Delhi, Oct 7—Congress(I) observers deputed to get district-level feedback of the party's prospects in the assembly polls have reported a discernible waning of the saffron wave in the four erstwhile BJP-ruled states.

However, the observers have cautioned that the downswing in the BJP's appeal is yet to be matched by a corresponding increase in the Congress(I)'s popularity. This is partly due to the moribund state of party units in states, particularly Uttar Pradesh, and the intense infighting in the Pradesh Congress(I) Committees.

Most of the 140-odd observers have noted that inner-party differences in the four PCCs remain the biggest stumbling block in the party's comeback trail. If the party is to mount a serious challenge to the BJP, then the high command must take the initiative in resolving the differences between state-level satraps, which have percolated to the districts.

For instance, all the AICC observers posted in the eight hill districts of Uttar Pradesh have underlined the need for the two senior leaders from the area, Mr N.D. Tiwari and Mr K.C. Pant, to patch up their longstanding rivalry. The eight hill districts account for about 20 Assembly seats.

Moreover, the high command must see that public wranglings for tickets are kept at a minimum and it must step in immediately to take over the ticket distribution process. Such a step would pre-empt the possibility of inner-party differences spilling out into the open with the disturbing frequency with which they have ever since the polls were announced.

The observers, who were posted in all the districts of the four states since the first week of September, have not been very charitable on the impact of the new economic policies. They have said the grassroots-level party worker is yet at a loss to propagate this aspect of the government's achievements since the benefits of economic reforms have not percolated to the bottom.

On the crucial Muslim vote, the observers have reported that while the Muslims are still cut up with the Congress(I), the party can recapture their confidence by projecting itself as the main challenger of the BJP in the four states.

The dominant theme of the suggestions on Madhya Pradesh is that the party must project strong Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste candidates to counter the influence of the Bahujan Samaj Party. About 40 per cent of the state's population is made up of these communities.

Meanwhile, responding to the suggestions of the observers, the high command has decided to set up screening committees at the central level to shortlist the nominations set by the PCCs. Screening committees have already been set up for Rajasthan and Delhi.

This decision was taken to ensure that factional rivalries which had cropped up in the shortlisting of candidates at the district level, are neutralised by the high command.

* Close Contests Foreseen in Rajasthan, Himachal, Madhya

94AS0068L New Delhi INDIA TODAY in English 15 Oct 93 pp 48-56

[Article by Ramesh Ninayak, Harinder Baweja: "Raiding the Votebanks"; first paragraph INDIA TODAY introduction]

[Text] In all the four states, a faction-riddled Congress(I) is facing a more battle-ready BJP because of mass contacts and better organisation. Yet, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh are heading for a close contest while Uttar Pradesh may get a hung assembly

UTTAR PRADESH

MULTI-CORNERED

Kalyan Singh calls it a Hindu Holy War, Mulayam Singh, the Last War and V.P. Singh, a Fight for Social Justice. Whatever they call it, their stakes are high.

CONGRESS(I): As pathetic situations go, the Congress(I)'s is an extreme case. At least on the surface. Two consecutive losses in 1989 and 1991 have been humiliating and what little morale remained has been trampled upon by infighting. Attempts at leadership have been so feeble that they have gone unnoticed by the electorate. UPCC [expansion not given] chief Mahavir Prasad, former CLP [expansion not given] leader Pramod Tewari and Union ministers such as Kalpnath Rai, Balram Singh Yadav and a horde of others have not dared show their faces to the public since the demolition. N.D. Tiwari, the one stalwart capable of recharging the party's grassroot batteries, has refused to contest the election in protest against his being sidelined by Rao and his coterie.

A party which still boasts of being the only truly national force capable of uniting the country, now has to bear the onus of being considered almost as repulsive as the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] to the Muslim voters who seem convinced that Rao abetted the demolition. And this is in a state where the Muslims can decide the results in as many as 30 parliamentary and 170 state assembly seats. In last year's 17 state assembly by-elections, indecisive Muslims were still giving the party the benefit of the doubt (the party won 17.6 per cent of the votes, close to its 1991 parliamentary elections figure) but that now looks like a thing of the past.

Rao's feeble attempts to muster public support with his recent visits to Kanpur and Gorakhpur pale beside the

embarrassing fiascos of the Som Yagya and the Sahmat programmes in Ayodhya. Indeed, other parties in the state are concentrating their energies on taking on the BJP and those who might have been linked with the Congress(I) are busy disclaiming any such association. Mulayam is denying his "clandestine" understanding with Rao which helped the Central Government survive the recent no-confidence motion. However, there is still talk about his eventually getting together with the Congress(I) since he remains its only possible ally in the state.

Ironically the Congress(I)'s weakness may also be its strength. Even if it stays at its current level of 46 seats, it will still be in demand for a coalition in the event of a hung assembly. In this era of dwindling legislative majorities, even a handful of people can make a difference. Also, the Muslims' antipathy towards Rao is tempered by the realisation that when parliamentary elections are held, which could be soon after the assembly polls, the Congress(I) might still be their best bet at the national level against the BJP, considering the limited resources and impact areas of both the Janata Dal and the SJP [expansion not given]. This outside chance has another one glued to it—the question of changes in the central leadership of the party. In such a case, Muslim anger, now directed against Rao, could cool swiftly. And with unpredictable results.

BJP: The party looks like a reigning heavyweight champion who is surprised to find himself buckling a little at the knees. It is desperate to improve on the 211 seats it won in 1991 but is unsure of the winning formula. Ever since the December 6 demolition, it has been trying to go easy on the Babri Masjid issue, if only because what had been portrayed as a major irritant for the Hindus had quite simply been erased.

Only a decision by the Centre to reconstruct the mosque on the same spot would have given the BJP a chance to whip up another wave of hysteria. In fact the prime minister's very indecisiveness has been keeping the BJP on tenterhooks over what line it should take. In the end, party leaders have decided to concentrate on the temple issue by default. So Kalyan Singh invoked Ram's name incessantly during his recently-concluded Janadesh Yatra, whether it was while joking about telephone conversations with Lord Ram to ensure that rain did not mar his rallies or declaring that he would keep chanting Ram's name even if Rao and the CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] led him to the execution chamber.

The BJP is running a defensive campaign, relying more on the weaknesses of its rivals, getting ready to denounce their alleged "pro-Muslim" tendencies and hoping for a division of votes between the Muslims and the OBC's [expansion not given] rather than being the torchbearer of a fundamental issue as it had been in the last elections. One of the BJP's biggest problems is reassuring voters about the law and order issue. Even sympathetic voters associate the BJP's upsurge during Kalyan Singh's regime along with the demolition of the masjid and its accompanying mob rule with indelible images of violence. The party points to its relatively good law and order record during the 15-month period of BJP rule but the association in most people's minds is too strong to be dispelled so easily. The state BJP's decision to have teams of at least 20 youths guarding each of the 90,000-odd polling booths is also quite risky.

The party's unfocused stance on Ayodhya and the absence of any pro-Hindu religious hysteria suggest that winning a majority will be no cakewalk. The BJP's best chances are if its rivals manage to bring about polarised voting along Hindu-Muslim lines but the state's caste divisions are likely to prevent such straightforward, communal voting. Unless, that is, Hindu voters believe that the Muslims will be voting en bloc. Or communal rioting breaks out.

Every campaign manager worth his salt knows that it helps to have at least one hero to project. The man who could fit the bill is Kalyan Singh, the "crusader" who gave the Hindus what they wanted. Moreover, he is a backward. But even on this simple personality issue, the BJP finds itself in a dilemma. A controversial figure within the party during the BJP's rule, Kalyan Singh's over-projection involves the risk of unleashing a debilitating round of infighting inside the party. The alternatives to Kalyan Singh are men like Kalraj Misra and Rajnath Singh but both are upper caste leaders and have therefore been ruled out.

JANATA DAL: The diminutive "dhartiputra" from Etawah is the man who enables V.P. Singh to smell power again, gives the Congress(I) hope that it might be able to remain in the fray and spells danger for the BJP. Ever since his tie-up with Kanshi Ram of the BSP [Bahujan Samaj Party] earlier this year, Mulayam Singh Yadav has created the impression of being the most formidable rival to the BJP with his Samajwadi Party and BSP kitty of votes totalling 21.7 per cent if 1991 is taken as an indicator. He believes it is a formidable combination, given his ability to rally Muslims and backwards while Kanshi Ram concentrates on the Harijan votes that have fetched them between 8 per cent and 9 per cent of the votes in each election.

The crucial question is how these votes will be divided if the Samajwadi Party and the Janata Dal fight the elections without reaching an understanding. The other crucial question is how such a division of the Muslim and OBC votes will affect the BJP's prospects. Now that V.P. Singh has patched things up with Ajit Singh's faction and the Left Front, he will fish hard for both the Muslim and OBC votes. V.P. Singh's party, which polled 19.5 per cent for its 91 seats in 1991, and the Samajwadi Party will want to grab the Muslims who will inevitably be deserting the Congress(I) as well as keeping the voters who have traditionally voted for them.

In the last elections, V.P. Singh had been damaged by the Mandal reaction and Mulayam Singh had been affected by the violence surrounding Ayodhya. The BJP had benefited. Both these issues have since lost some of their potency. But past voting patterns offer a fascinating psephological insight. In the 170-odd Muslim dominated constituencies comprising 20 per cent or more Muslim voters, the BJP scored major victories and won nearly 80 per cent of the seats because of the communal polarisation created by en bloc voting by Muslims. Not surprisingly, the

Janata Dal and the SJP (now the Samajwadi Party) made a better showing, in fact unexpected at times, in constituencies which had a balanced mix of castes and especially where Muslims were less than 15 per cent.

This indicates that caste factors come into play wherever the communal angle softens and there is no polarised voting among the Hindus and Muslims. Considering that communal hysteria may be missing in this election, a division of Muslim votes in the Muslim dominated constituencies could prove a blessing in disguise for the BJP's rivals. The Hindutva conch will not blare as loudly as in a situation where the Muslims are lining up in two different directions. The BJP, for its part, would certainly prefer a situation where the voters can see a distinctive Muslim voters' queue.

This explains Mulayam Singh's current attitude of shunning alliances with either the Congress(I) or with the Janata Dal. It means he realises the value of the division of votes. Whereas some of his own votes might end up going to V.P. Singh, he in turn can hope for a split in the upper caste vote amongst the BJP and the Congress(I). Also, Mulayam Singh now believes that he is more acceptable to castes like the Kurmis and Thakurs who are still hostile to V.P. Singh and would shun an alliance with him.

While V.P. Singh is still single-mindedly pursuing the Muslim vote bank, Mulayam Singh is now hedging his bets a little. Aware that his projection as the messiah of the Muslims produced the pro-BJP backlash and the nickname "Mullah Singh," he made sure that his recent mammoth rally in Lucknow did not have the appearance of a Muslim congregation. He ensured this by cleverly holding the rally on Friday, a holy day for the Muslims, but ensuring that he began his speech at a time when they were busy offering namaz.

MADHYA PRADESH

A STRAIGHT CONTEST

Improving its hold over the backwards through the Mandal report and with Arjun Singh on his home turf, the Congress(I) has a fighting chance over the BJP.

CONGRESS(I): Pradesh is one state where the Congress(I) has an even chance of defeating the BJP in a straight fight. Unless, that is, the Rao-Arjun Singh rivalry throws a spanner in the works. The party here has always been in the running for a decent showing. The BJP came to power in the 1990 assembly elections by winning 220 out of 320 assembly seats. The Congress(I) had managed to get only 56 seats. But within one year the popularity rating of the BJP government went down sharply. In the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP could get only 12 of the 40 Lok Sabha seats while the Congress(I) captured 27 seats.

An analysis of the 1991 poll shows that of the 320 assembly segments, the BJP led in only 129, a sharp decline from its position just a year ago. In contrast, the Congress(I) improved its performance by leading in as many as 184 assembly segments. Yet, instead of mobilising its resources, the Congress(I) is bogged down in the selection of candidates. Since Arjun Singh is the only leader who can possibly take his party to victory in the state, if his enemies manage to sideline him and allot tickets on the basis of group loyalties, it could be dangerous for the Congress(I).

On the ground, the Congress(I) has a number of strengths. It received a tremendous boost by the Centre's decision to start implementing the Mandal report. OBCs constitute 48 per cent of the state's population. The party has also managed to retain its hold over the SCs and STs, who comprise over one-third of the state's population. The party is fortunate in having not only a dynamic state chief in Digvijay Singh, but also (unlike the BJP), plenty of leaders with national reputations such as the Shukla brothers, Madhavrao Scindia and Motilal Vora. Each one has his own specific regional base. Arjun Singh's stronghold is the Vindhya region with 45 seats but he has pockets of influence all over the state. V.C. Shukla and S.C. Shukla hold sway in the Chhattisgarh region with 90 seats. And Scindia's home ground is the Gwalior region with 35 seats.

The party is, however, hampered by the maladministration and corruption during the last nine months of President's Rule. The BJP is certain to exploit the issue. Former BJP chief minister Sunderlal Patwa says: "There is no government. Anarchy prevails all around."

Overall, Congress(I) leaders are optimistic but not stupid enough to be smug. As Arjun Singh says: "The BJP is no longer that strong. But we must be very careful." In the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress(I) had polled 45 per cent of the votes and the BJP, 42 per cent. A tilt of just 2 per cent could make the difference between defeat and victory.

BJP: Knowing that it's touch and go in a state which is even more important for the party than Uttar Pradesh because it has been the cradle of RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (organization of service to the nation)] ideology, the BJP has paid special attention to it. It was given the pride of place in the Janadesh Yatra even though the exercise proved to be a disappointment. Even at the September 25 Bhopal rally which marked the culmination of the yatra, most of the two lakh people present were either party workers or supporters.

Other party leaders also received a miserable response. Bhairon Singh Shekhawat was forced to curtail his yatra from Jammu in Rajasthan itself. Atal Behari Vajpayee, who was scheduled to accompany Shekhawat from the Madhya Pradesh border, had to go it alone. At Indore, the turnout was so poor that instead of addressing the public meeting there Vajpayee drove straight to Bhopal. Even Kalyan Singh, who had a successful run in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, could not make much headway in Madhya Pradesh. A worse fate awaited Patwa. Except at a few places like Itarsi, his meetings were attended mostly by BJP workers. All of them, however, tried to rouse communal passions by referring to the controversial Sahmat poster depicting Ram and Sita as siblings. Patwa thundered: "Millions of Hindus of this country will never tolerate this attempt by the Congress(I) to insult their gods and goddesses."

The party has gained an edge over the Congress(I) by starting the task of selecting candidates and beginning fund-raising. It has requisitioned an army of youths to man every one of the 33,000 polling stations. It is also organising camps to train workers in campaigning. The party's weakness in the rural areas has been alleviated to some extent as the RSS has made its presence felt through the 4,000 schools opened by one of its front organisations.

Infighting plagues the BJP as much as it does the Congress(I). The rival groups are headed by Patwa and his arch rival, V.K. Sakhlecha. There has been much bickering over ticket distribution. Another problem the party faces is that the image of most of its former legislators is so bad that repeating them will be disastrous. Moreover, the party's base is confined to the Madhya Bharat region, comprising Gwalior, Indore, Malwa, Ujjain and Chambal, and, in terms of social groups, amongst the urban middle class and farmers.

RAJASTHAN

EVENLY MATCHED

The BJP is nursing its high caste supporters to defeat a Congress(I) badly tainted by infighting and maladministration during President's rule.

CONGRESS(I): It was one of the most impressive public rallies in Jaipur. And the perfect platform for the party to launch its poll campaign. But the Congress(I) botched it. Last fortnight's rally organised to honour Jat leader Nathuram Mirdha's 50 years in politics merely brought out the factionalism which can go against it in the polls.

However, the Congress(I) seems to have improved its position substantially in the past two months. The rally demonstrated that the BJP's Ram card no longer cuts much ice with the powerful Jat voters who had turned up in strength. The Jat community carries the key to success in at least 40 of the 200 constituencies and is solidly behind the Congress(I).

What could upset the Congress(I)'s applecart is the infighting. Instead of concentrating on the BJP challenge, the party has split into two main factions, one led by former chief minister Haridev Joshi and the other by the Maderna-Jakhar-Pilot axis. Parasram Maderna, for instance, did not attend the rally which he perceived, rightly, as an attempt to cut him down to size. The rally, in fact, became a show of strength between the dominating Joshi group and the Maderna faction.

One reason for the rivalry is ticket distribution. Although the PCC(I) [Pradesh Congress Committee] is inviting applications, it is common knowledge that the nominations will be decided in Delhi. The Joshi group, according to inside sources, will be submitting a separate list of candidates.

Another factor working against the Congress(I) is its management of the state during President's Rule. Constant meddling in the state's affairs by V.C. Shukla, who heads the committee formed by the high command to look after Rajasthan's affairs, has antagonised local Congressmen.

Its blatant use of the administrative machinery for poll purposes could also prove to be counter-productive. The new Governor, Baliram Bhagat, seems to be dancing to Shukla's tune and does not even try to hide the fact that his brief is to help the Congress(I). Mass transfers of senior IAS [Indian Administrative Service], IPS [Indian Police Service] and state civil service officers are being defended by Joshi, by saying: "The BJP had packed its officers in key positions. Hence the transfers were necessary." But, in the electoral fray, that necessity could prove to be a double-edged weapon that works against the Congress(I).

BJP: Going by statistics, the two contenders for power are evenly matched in Rajasthan. In the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress(I) had captured 102 of the 200 assembly segments by polling 44 per cent votes. The BJP led in 96 Assembly segments by polling 40 per cent votes. A swing of just 4 per cent votes could tilt the balance substantially.

That is why the BJP started gearing up for the polls as early as last summer when it chalked out a detailed action plan, dividing the state into 10 divisions, each under the charge of a senior leader to coordinate party activities. It also organised training camps for workers in 130 of the 200 constituencies, making available a team of 1.50 lakh trained volunteers. The BJP has also undertaken an ambitious fund-raising exercise with a target of Rs 3 crore. Says state party chief Ramdas Aggarwal: "This will not only raise resources for the party but also help activate and involve the rank and file up to the village level."

The BJP's gameplan is to mobilise support along caste lines. Former chief minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, a Rajput, has been actively participating in Rajput functions and has been trying to lure influential Rajputs. The BJP also hopes to attract upper caste Brahmin, Bania and Marwari votes. Indeed, the party does not conceal the fact that it will select its candidates on the basis of caste composition.

However, compared to the Congress(I), the BJP does not have a very strong network in the villages. In fact, so far the party has never contested more than 128 seats and by planning to contest all 200 seats this time it may mean it is spreading itself a bit thin. While this may improve its total vote, the party could end up losing seats.

There is also the problem of groupism. There is a war of supremacy on between the pro- and anti-RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (organization of service to the nation)] lobbies for tickets. Last fortnight, workers threw shoes and stones at the dais during the Kota constituency training camp. Said Lalit Kishore Chaturvedi, Shekhawat's main rival: "These goons cannot be our workers."

Such ugly scenes are the attempts to sideline Shekhawat, who is responsible for building up the party from scratch in Rajasthan. BJP national Vice-President Sunder Singh Bhandari, a known Shekhawat opponent, recently declared at Bhilwara that the party would not project any leader as the future chief minister. Shekhawat was also not included in the Central Parliamentary Board or any important central committee. But such attempts to clip the wings of a

man who has become almost synonymous with the BJP in Rajasthan could prove expensive.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

AIRING LOCAL ISSUES

The Congress(I) tries to win voters with talk of development while the BJP harps on self-reliance through royalty for the state's natural resources.

CONGRESS(I): The party is facing a challenge on two fronts—from the BJP outside and bickering partymen within. As two factions—one led by PCC(I) chief Virbhadra Singh and the other by Union Minister Sukh Ram—struggle for the upper hand, it is affecting the party's poll strategy and battle readiness. The infighting has percolated down to the grassroots level so that a schism has developed among the rank and file too.

With both factions trying to appropriate a lion's share of the tickets, the high command is finding it very difficult to select candidates for 68 seats out of the 500-odd contenders. The struggle for tickets is fierce in all the 16 segments of Kangra, politically most important for both factions. Most of the friction is because of the claims of seven former SJP and Janata Dal MLAs [Member of Legislative Council] who were brought into the party by Virbhadra Singh last year to counter his rivals on their home turf.

In a clever shift of strategy, the Congress(I), which has been harping so far on the "failures" of the dismissed BJP government, is now using development as its main plank to counter the BJP's demand for royalty for the state's natural resources. But its hopes are still based on the disenchantment of the people, especially the apply lobby, with the BJP.

BJP: The BJP is also looking a bit ragged around the edges. Its Janadesh Yatra failed to evoke much response. However, the BJP has an edge over the Congress(I) as far as readiness is concerned. The selection of candidates has been a smooth affair and is almost over. There is little wrangling over tickets as the high command did not ignore dissident Thakur Jagdev Chand and Maheshwar Singh, who are now working with former chief minister Shanta Kumar to ensure victory.

Even the Congress(I) admits that the BJP has been able to reorganise itself and recover some of the ground it had lost since December 6 last year. Though the halo of martyrdom over its dismissal has faded and the temple issue has been pushed into the background, it has tried to build up a campaign for a "self-reliant Himachal." Says Shanta Kumar: "Royalty will be our main poll plank as it concerns one and all." The idea is that the Centre should pay Himachal Rs 200 crore as royalty for its hydro projects which the Centre uses for generating power.

However, the disenchantment of state government employees and apple growers is giving the party sleepless nights. The employee factor has always played a decisive role in Himachal Pradesh politics while the apple lobby is strong in at least nine segments in the Upper Shimla, Mandi and Sirmaur areas. Though the party has made inroads into these lobbies, it has not created a solid base for itself yet.

Himachal is poised for a one-to-one fight between the Congress(I) and the BJP and neither can be absolutely sure of victory. The balance could swing either way.

DELHI

STREET FIGHTING

The stage is set for a fierce and filthy street fight. For it is not just an election contest for Delhi's 70 assembly seats but a struggle for control over the capital which will have its own chief minister and a council of seven ministers. It is a tussle for what veteran Congress(I) leader H.K.L. Bhagat calls the "international drawing-room of India."

The battle lines were drawn as soon as Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) T.N. Seshan set the poll process in motion by asking the capital's Lt-Governor P.K. Dave to issue the poll notification for November 6. Caught unawares, all the three major parties in the fray—the Congress(I), the BJP and the Janata Dal—went into a tizzy desperately trying to work out their individual strategies for capturing the capital's throne.

It was the moment that most leaders had been awaiting for a long time. But still, when the formal announcement was made, all the parties seemed to have been caught napping. The Congress(I), which was the worst hit by Seshan's order, immediately started making loud noises about the arbitrary manner in which the CEC had gone ahead and taken the decision without even going through the formality of talking to Dave.

Trying desperately to get the polls postponed by four weeks, the Congress(I) reluctantly set about its task of taking on the BJP, considered to be the stronger of the two parties. Senior officials of the Home Ministry even had a long meeting with Seshan in the hope that they would be able to secure a postponement on the ground that the assembly election and the municipal body election should be held simultaneously. But, says Seshan: "I have said that November 6 is the day, not the likely day."

As D-Day approaches, the Congress(I) and the BJP are working at a feverish pace to set their houses in order. Unfortunately for the Congress(I), the poll announcement was made on the very day that members of the warring Bhagat and R.K. Dhawan factions fought openly in the presence of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao against the holding of elections in the capital. The Dhawan group, which includes Rajesh Khanna, openly traded such angry charges with Bhagat's supporters during a discussion at Rao's residence that the prime minister finally walked out of the meeting in disgust.

That's exactly the state of preparedness of the ruling party. For one, it is not clear yet who the party will project as chief minister. For the time being, the two factions are working overtime to pull each other down even as Bhagat readies himself for what really is his battle for survival. The undisputed leader of East Delhi Lok Sabha constituency till 1991 when he lost to the VJP's [expansion not

given] B.L. Sharma by 80,000 votes, Bhagat has since joined forces with Sajjan Kumar and both are concentrating their energies on the 41 assembly segments of Outer Delhi and East Delhi.

As many as 27 lakh out of a total of 57 lakh voters are concentrated in these 41 constituencies and it is really here that the fate of Delhi's future power centre will be decided. It is also here that the Janata Dal is concentrating—for most of Delhi's Muslim and backward class voters live here—apart from the four seats in Chandni Chowk where Muslims can tilt the balance. The Congress(I) is worried, and not without adequate reason, for the Janata Dal is quite likely to eat into its votes.

Bhagat, as the Delhi Pradesh Congress(I) Committee chief, will have to fight on two fronts—against the BJP and the dissidents within his own party, who, at every given opportunity, remind people about Bhagat's and Sajjan Kumar's alleged role in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. A campaign that will undoubtedly unsettle the duo, for Sikhs control the fortunes of candidates in at least 20 to 25 of the 70 assembly seats. "The mischief makers will be isolated. Neither they nor the BJP will succeed because Delhi is not a place where communalism can win," asserts Bhagat.

The party functionaries' anxious activity belies Bhagat's claims. They admit that the BJP is a formidable foe, even though its city units are divided into two opposing camps—one led by the Delhi party unit chief O.P. Kohli and the other by Madan Lal Khurana. Here too a tussle exists over whom to project as the future chief minister. But that's about the only minus. The party is already on a high, having recently won elections to the Delhi University teachers' and students' unions.

"The Congress(I) does not have a leg to stand on. What have they done for Delhi in the last two-and-a-half years that they have been in power?" asks Kohli. The Congress(I) will find it tough to counter attacks from its rivals on local issues such as the recent hikes in DTC [Delhi Transport Corporation] bus fares and the proposed increase in the electricity tariff.

Besides the local issues pertaining to ration cards, electricity, water, housing and the problems being faced by Delhi's voters, a majority of whom live in flats and resettlement colonies, the BJP is planning to rake up the Religion Bill controversy, its temple plank and also talk about what it calls the deteriorating law and order situation in the capital. The Congress(I), on the other hand, is preparing itself along the lines of the slogan, *Vikas lao, vinash hatao, desh bachao* (Usher in development, banish destructive forces and save the country). With an emphasis on developmental work, the Congress(I) leaders are readying themselves to attack the BJP whom they plan to taint as a party that can only "create Hindu-Muslim riots." The Janata Dal, whose main campaigner, V.P. Singh, has refused to return to the capital till the Government makes its first Mandal Commission appointment, will have to make do with tape-recorded speeches of their leader.

Even as the parties busy themselves in finalising the list of candidates, one thing is certain: elections for the prestigious power centre will be a fight to the finish. The Congress(I) fighting to survive and the BJP fighting to prove itself as the national alternative.

Congress (I)

• Poor Showing in State Elections Foreseen for Congress (I)

• Helpless in Uttar Pradesh

93AS1072A New Delhi INDIA TODAY in English 31 Jul 93 p 37

[Article by Dilip Awasthi]

[Text] Uttar Pradesh. Total Seats: 425—BJP: 221; JD: 91; CONG(I): 47; SJP: 33. Others: 26; Vacant: 7

Feeling of Helplessness

If Bofors was Rajiv Gandhi's political nemesis in Uttar Pradesh, Harshad's allegations may well prove to be Narasimha Rao's downfall when elections are held in the state in November. While the urban middle class has taken Harshad's charges with a pinch of salt, alarmingly for Rao it is in the rural areas that his credibility has sunk to an all-time low. What is most worrying for the Congress(I) in general and the prime minister in particular is the cynicism among the people. Even with insufficient evidence the rural folk are prone to lean towards Harshad's version. "Aakhir kuch to hogaa, nahin to Mejta ki itni himmat hoti?" (There must be something to it, or would Mehta have had such guts?) is the common refrain heard in the countryside.

In the face of such a negative attitude of the people, state Congress(I) leaders are at a complete loss over how to handle the crisis. Reflecting the helplessness in the party, a senior party leader says: "It is something none of us can easily explain to the people. And if some of us try, we cannot hope to convince them so easily."

Not that they haven't tried at all. After Harshad had exploded the bombshell, the UPCC(I) decided to launch a campaign at the district and block levels to dispute his allegation. But rather strangely they weren't even able to convince all their partymen of Rao's innocence, let alone the people of the state. Many state leaders refused to participate in the campaign. With the party unable to put up a united front even at this moment of crisis, it is perilously close to blowing up its chances altogether for the November Assembly elections.

Rao has been making a last ditch attempt to bolster his sagging image. He held two public rallies in Kanpur and Saharanpur. Though the response to the meetings was good, the fact remains that the party seems to have been in a state of inertia ever since the December 6 demolition of the Babri Masjid. Much of the blame for this state of affairs lies with Rao himself who for the past two years has deliberately kept down someone as prominent as N.D. Tiwari out of a determination to prevent any Hindi

heartland leader from becoming too powerful. Even second-rank leaders such as Mohsina Kidwai and B.P. Maurya were sidelined and excluded from senior party forums for the same reason.

Many party leaders seem to be completely blind to the disaster staring them in the face. UPCC(I) chief Mahavir Prasad is still indulging in grand rhetoric about how the party will emerge as the winner. But the unpleasant truth is that even people like Prasad and Union minister Balram Singh Yadav will need to watch out for their seats.

Some Congressmen believe the only way for the party to gather support in Uttar Pradesh is by reviving N.D. Tiwari. Sensing the need for Tiwari's resurrection, Rao had already started praising him at public meetings. As a senior party leader Arun Kumar Singh admitted: "Tiwari is possibly the last chance we all have."

Given the cynicism among the people, he probably is. Moreover, with the BJP posing a formidable challenge through a star-studded central leadership, an effective state organisation and, most importantly, a crystal clear policy, the Congress(I) needs to pull up its socks quickly if it wants to stand a chance in the Assembly elections.

* Hindu Wave in Madhya Pradesh

9165107ZB New Delhi INDIA TODAY in English 31 Jul 93 pp 37-38

[Article by N.K. Singh]

[Text] Madhya Pradesh, Total Seats: 320—BJP: 219; JD: 17; CONG(I): 54; Others: 27; Vacant: 3

Hindu Wave Persists

The atmosphere in the party is, as a senior vice-president of the MPCC(I) puts it, "not very conducive" towards an election in November. Besides being held responsible for all the ills of the state under President's Rule, the image of the party has been dented further by Harshad's allegations. The party's complacency in countering the BJP's propaganda on this issue, in the belief that the charge of a man at the centre of the securities scandal will not hold against a person with a "clean background," may prove expensive in the long run.

Although the Ayodhya issue does not evoke such strong passions as it did before in the state, Hindu nationalism is still likely to remain the major issue in the coming months. The communal riots in Bhopal last December and the following schism between the Hindus and Muslims have ensured that.

The half-hearted attempts of the Congress(I) to ingratiate itself with the rural electorate by offering the Panchayati Raj sop has failed to have much effect. Says a former Congress(I) MLA: "The leadership should realise that earlier attempts made on similar lines had failed to pay electoral dividends."

Ironically, the Congress(I) was in a rather comfortable position towards the end of last year. The Sundarlal Patwa government had discredited itself by its indifferent performance and corruption. Admits BJP state unit chief Lakhiram Agarwal: "If we had contested the elections last year, it would have certainly caused some problems for us."

Unfortunately for the Congress(I), which is identified with the present regime, the state has witnessed unprecedented misrule and corruption in the last six months under President's Rule. Even Congress(I) leaders were forced to ask for the removal of the governor, Kunwar Mehmood Ali Khan. He was sacked last month but he had already caused much damage. Even now, the state is in the grip of a transfer mania, with the entire Government paralysed by the mass transfers of officials.

To make matters worse, the state unit of the Congress(I) is also paralysed by the infighting among leaders. All this while the BJP stands poised and confident for the polls. It has expanded its influence to the rural areas through the 4,000-odd schools opened by the RSS in the last three years.

For the Congress(I), which was already struggling to counter a rejuvenated BJP in Madhya Pradesh, Harshad's allegations are the last thing it needed. Its ability to make good the damage in the next few months depends on its leaders' willingness to close ranks.

* Squabbling in Rajasthan

9165107ZC New Delhi INDIA TODAY in English 31 Jul 93 p 38

[Article by N.K. Singh and Sanjay Chouhan]

[Text] Rajasthan, Total Seats: 200—BJP: 84; JD(Digvijay): 23; CONG(I): 50 and Others: 41

Endless Party Squabbles

Unity looks like something of a mirage for the Congress(I) in Rajasthan. Despite the fact that elections are due in November, the state unit of the party is in a shambles. Instead of getting cracking with the nitty-gritty of the campaign, Congressmen are squabbling among themselves in blatant attempts at self-promotion.

State party chief Paras Ram Maderna has locked horns with Union minister V.C. Shukla, chairman of the state coordination committee. Maderna has been criticising Shukla for interfering in the state unit's affairs and, last fortnight, even carried his complaints to New Delhi. The root of the problem is that Maderna feels Shukla is close to former chief minister Harideo Joshi, who leads the Brahmin group and is Maderna's arch rival.

Thanks to the factionalism the Congress(I) has lost the chance to take an initiative on local issues, all to the BJP's advantage. When 282 mines were closed down in the Sariska area, former BJP chief minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat toured the area and promised to help the powerful mining lobby if the BJP came to power. Says an alarmed Congress(I) official: "We can only hope for 65 seats at best."

Another area of concern for the Congress(I) is that Jats dominate 50 of Rajasthan's 200 seats and can influence

another 50. The absence of Jat leader Nathuram Mirdha through illness might prove expensive for the Congress(I).

The BJP, on the other hand, has already chalked out a four-month-long programme to prepare party workers. The state has been put into 10 divisions with a senior leader coordinating the party's activities in each division. It will be organising 200 training camps, one in each constituency, in which five workers from each polling booth will participate.

The Congress(I) could cash in on the fact that the Shekhawat government avoided holding panchayat elections. This could be a big help in the rural areas, which account for over 80 per cent of the state's population.

The other redeeming feature for the Congress(I) is that the state BJP has not been able to fully exploit the Harshad Mehta affair to the Congress(I)'s detriment. Shekhawat's silence on the matter is an indication that the BJP is rethinking its strategy to launch an agitation on corruption.

At a recent public meeting at Ajmer, Rao pointed out that he should be treated as innocent until proved guilty. Just how many people are willing to buy his view will be known when the elections are announced four months down the line.

* Poor Campaign in Himachal Pradesh

93AS1072D New Delhi INDIA TODAY in English 31 Jul 93 p 38

[Article by Ramesh Vinayak]

[Text] Himachal Pradesh, Total Seats: 68—BJP: 48; JD: 1; CONG(I): 16; Others: 3

Too Late a Start

Home Minister S.B. Chavan hit the nail bang on the head recently when he told state leaders that the real threat to the Congress(I) was from within rather than from the BJP. Badly beset by factionalism the party was not even able to defend Rao effectively against Hershad's allegations. The BJP, itself fending off corruption charges, went on the offensive linking Harshad's accusations with the Bofors issue and making corruption its main election plank.

During Bali Ram Bhagat's tenure as Governor up to last June, the infighting between the groups led by PCC(I) chief Virbhadra Singh and Union Minister of State for Communications Sukh Ram had reached such a pass that the high command had to intervene. But the Sikh Ram faction still stayed away from a function organised by the state unit at Dharamshala on June 21 to mark the completion of Rao's two years in office. Its leaders addressed parallel meetings in Kangra instead.

The bone of contention between the factions is the post of chief minister, in the event of the party winning a majority. Singh, so far the sole claimant, now has a rival from amongst the dissidents, Sukh Ram, in total disregard of the high command's warning against projecting any other name. Sukh Ram has emerged as a rallying point for the dissident leaders. His followers have been publicly saying that in the event of a Congress(I) victory the next chief minister will be from Kangra. Singh is from the Shimla region.

The BJP, on the other hand, has been deliberately playing down the Ayodhya issue in favour of the matter of water royalties. Its demand for Rs 200 crore as royalty from the Centre has provided it with a crucial election plank. It is even arranging a training camp for party workers in Shimla.

The Congress(I), bereft of any major local issue, is harping on the "anti-people policies" of the previous BJP government. The party plans to launch its election campaign proper only by mid-August. It might find then that it has barely got off the blocks while the BJP is already halfway round the track.

* Analyst Sees Poor Showing

93AS1072E New Delhi INDIA TODAY in English 31 Jul 93 p 36

[Article by Harinder Baweja: "The Naked Truth"]

[Text] With just four months to go before elections in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, the Congress(I) is examining its prospects. It has learnt from an internal data analysis that it has reason to feel nervous about its prospects in the four states which have been under President's rule since December 15.

The data analysis is based on computerised details of the party's performance since 1962, using lost deposits, caste factors, rankings in multi-cornered and straight fights as benchmarks to project a constituency-by-constituency electoral strategy for the party in three states.

The analysis, being kept under tight wraps, was shown to Principal Correspondent Harinder Baweja. Some of the preliminary conclusions of the study are:

Uttar Pradesh

Of the total 425 Assembly seats, the Congress(I) won only 47 seats in 1991. These candidates are recommended, as are the 110 candidates who finished second, because in a poll in which the Congress(I) was all but wiped out, their individual performance is rated as creditable.

Among the 268 candidates who came third or below, as many as 229 lost their deposits, unlike in 1989 when only 47 lost their deposits in 1985 when only two did. In 36 constituencies, Congress(I) candidates lost their deposits both in 1989 and 1991 and unless a special effort is made here, these constituencies may as well be written off.

As many as 193 candidates forfeited their security deposit for the first time in 1991 and of these, 100 got less than 10 per cent of the votes polled. These 100 seats have been put in the hopeless category—seats which the party has never won in the last three elections.

The party needs to work out an effective campaign in the 106 constituencies where Muslims constitute over 20 per cent of the population, especially since in the 1991 election

only four of the 58 Muslim candidates won while 14 finished second. The remaining 40 fared miserably.

In the 170 constituencies where Ahirs and Yadavs make up more than 10 per cent of the population, the party needs to refocus its stand on the Mandal issue.

Alliances with the BSP and the SJP should be explored.

Madhya Pradesh

The Congress(I) won just 57 of the 320 Assembly seats in 1990. Only the winning candidates, and the 149 who finished second, should face the coming polls.

Candidates in another 75 seats need to be reviewed.

In another 35 seats, the party has to scrutinise its choice of candidates and its image.

Thirteen seats have been classified as hopeless.

The BSP will cut into the Congress(I)'s votes, because even though it did not win many seats, it finished second and third in many constituencies. An alliance should be explored.

Rajasthan

Special efforts are needed because the party's performance has dropped sharply, from 47.7 per cent of the votes polled in 1985 to 33.5 per cent in 1990.

The party won only 50 of the total 200 seats with even the Janata Dal winning 54 seats. As the contest will be triangular, the campaign should be clearly-defined.

Special efforts are needed in 42 seats where the candidates secured less than 30 per cent of the votes polled last time.

Nineteen seats are classified as poor and 25 as hopeless.

* Congress Seen Helpless, Engaging in 'Constitutional Subterfuge'

94AS0046D Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 26 Aug 93 p 8

[Editorial: "Religion and Politics"]

[Text] When the Congress(I) lapses into slogans it is a sign that the party is on the defensive and has few weapons left in its armoury. Cornered by her colleagues, Indira Gandhi stormed the country with the slogan of socialism here and now, to the wild applause of the Leftists who were willing to let her steal their clothes and even let her amend the Constitution to proclaim that India was a socialist State. Then came the slogan against dual-membership, invented to wreck Mr Morarji Desai's Government. In the same tradition is the clarion call to delink religion from politics. The facts are simply stated. The constitutional mandate is a secular democracy with every citizen free not only to practise but to propagate the religion of his choice provided he does not infringe the rights of others. Abuse of religion for political purposes is not permitted but every political party without exception has been guilty of the abuse. The Sangh Parivar simply carried things to excess by its campaign of intolerance and hatred last December. Unable to face the threat from the BJP politically, the Congress(I) sought to amend the Constitution for the 80th time. They must have known that they were unlikely to muster the necessary two-thirds majority in Parliament but hoped for a propaganda victory after wasting a lot of Parliamentary time and the labours of a joint Select Committee.

The proposed amendments are at best unnecessary and at worst a cruel deception. Equal respect for all religions is a cornerstone of the Constitution and does not need any repetition. To attack religious symbolism while ignoring the poison being injected into people's minds is to be dishonest. The Government is both unable and unwilling to atone for the wanton destruction of Ayodhya, it is not an answer to respond by seeking to eliminate inconvenient political parties by constitutional subterfuge. The Congress(I) is mistaken if it thinks that it has gained anything by throwing a pot of secular paint over itself and bleat that but for the lack of a suitable majority in Parliament it would have done its duty. It had such a majority under Rajiv Gandhi, it misused it to impose upon this nation the most corrupt government in the country's history.

This too clever by half manoeuvre has ensured that the only gainers will be the BJP. Mr Advani is quick off the mark to claim a "great victory." No victory was achieved with less effort. It was a gift from the Congress(I). Syed Shahabuddin is close to the mark when he says that the Government was always more interested in the pre-emptive part of the Bill than in its spirit. One Minister who waxes eloquent on the subject is Mr Arjun Singh. He would be well-advised to curb his ambition, stop descending on public meetings in helicopters, stay put in his extremely important ministry and concentrate on putting education back on the rails. The battle against intolerance, bigotry and hatred is in the minds of men and the time to fight the battle is while the minds are young and in school. For Mr Arjun Singh's benefit, this is where the battle is being lost.

* Congress Mounting Hi-Tech Campaigning in BJP States

94AS0003H Madras INDIAN EXPRESS in English 18 Sep 93 p 1

[Article by Sanjeev Miglani]

[Text] New Delhi—The Congress, in a desperate gamble, is set to unleash a multi-crore blitzkrieg in the four formerly BJP-ruled states. Congress strategists, at the moment, finalizing the audio, video and print media offensive in the four states are tight-lipped over the figure involved, but by conservative estimates, it touches Rs 40 crore. Interestingly, a major part of the media expenses are being taken care of discretely by private companies. The Congress managers comprising Jitendra Prasada, Pranab Mukherjee, G.K. Moopanar, Sushilkumar Shinde, Nawal Kishore Sharma and Vinod Sharma, are understood to have had detailed meetings with the advertisement men. However,

no final decision appears to have been taken with regard to the ad agencies to be entrusted with the sensitive responsibility. Party spokesman Vithal N. Gadgil, confirming that there would be a hard-sell, indicated that no final decision had been taken so far. "What I have been told is to provide the political brief to the agencies, once the decision is taken." The Prime Minister himself is being regularly briefed over the blue-print of the advertising campaign. In the past when Rajiv Gandhi had introduced political advertising in the 1984 general elections, the party had to face ridicule on account of some of the "market-savvy" political logic. Rao, in strategy sessions this week, has stressed on a "subtle and hard-hitting campaign" with local flavor and in the language of the people. In other words, it means attacking the BJP on its mix of religion and politics and its performance in the four states. Image-building of the Prime Minister, the star campaigner for the party, has already begun through deft use of foreign tours and government media. More than China, it is Rao's three-day visit to Iran next week on which the Congress strategists have pinned their hopes. According to the political input being provided to the Prime Minister the trip to one of the most "Islamic" of nations should be exploited for domestic reasons, in view of the continuing alienation of the minorities following the Babri masjid demolition. Thrown in the publicity package now on the drawing board is also a desperate flashback of the Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi images. Instructions to produce cassettes projecting Narasimha Rao as carrying on the legacy of Rajiv Gandhi and his mother are being issued. Already giant hoardings have come up outside the AICC headquarters projecting Rao in the line of his worthy predecessors. Targeting the BJP, the thrust of the advertising campaign is to show up the horrors of the "deadly mix of religion and politics". An effort is on to rope in apolitical artistes like Anup Jalota with a view to impress upon the people these performers' strictly apolitical roles. Video sets mounted on vehicles are to be taken to remote hamlets of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Part of the appeal appears to be to attract the villagers with the high-tech equipment. In a departure from past practice, Congress managers have decided to hire admen to organize the shows in the villages, rather than depend on the Pradesh Congress committees. In the past, according to their experience several of the material sent by the headquarters had been lying unused in the PCC offices. Audio cassettes are now going to be dubbed in the local dialects. In addition the local newspapers in the four states will be used to project the Congress achievements in bolstering the economy, Mandal and the series of populist measures announced by the Prime Minister in recent weeks. The basis of these messages will be a bunch of 30 pamphlets currently under preparation. While the official camp is getting its act together in a burst of activity following the tentative dates announced by the Election Commission, Arjun Singh has already dashed off his contribution to the "war effort". A slogan said to be coined by Singh has already reached the Madhya Pradesh Congress committee. It says "Janadesh kiska? Mahatma Gandhi ya Nathuram Godse ka?" The HRD Minister, for long the conscience-keeper of the party, has targeted the janadesh yatra of the BJP culminating in his home state.

* Lack of Local Leadership Seen Costing Congress (I) Dearly

94AS0047D Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 29 Sep 93 p 8

[Article by Ashok Malik: "Leading by Misleading"]

[Text] "Systemic failure" is a phrase which gained currency when Mr Manmohan Singh, the finance minister, used it to describe the securities scandal last year. Should the Congress suffer large defeats in the coming assembly elections in Delhi, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the phrase could be used to explain them as well.

The system in question is the shaky "federalism," for lack of a better term, which hitherto served the Congress. It has been decaying for a long time, in fact—and this infrastructural debilitation could cost the Congress dear in December 1993.

Rarely has India's oldest and largest political party faced an electoral battle with such despondency. The very sight of the Congress seeking electoral allies in the form of essentially regional and sectarian groups has been fairly unprecedented in the Hindi heartland.

In recent years, the Congress has had the odd political alliance with smaller bodies—it joined hands with the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha before the 1980 general elections, for example. Yet, never before has there been any question of sacrificing the spoils of office or the post of chief minister. In, say, UP this year, this is just the reality the Congress has come to realise and accept.

In previous decades, when the Congress was still India's natural party of governance, the opposition groups were the ones accused of forming desperate alliances—sometimes labelled "unprincipled"—so as to thwart the overwhelming favourite in the great electoral battles of the North Indian plains.

Today, for the polls in UP at least, it is the Congress which is soliciting and encouraging every political element with a grouse against the Bharatiya Janata Party. This explains why the party's leadership has sought the help of individuals as diverse as the shahi imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav and Mr Mahendra Singh Tikait.

Many have attributed this decline in the fortunes of the Congress to the precarious communal relations of recent years. Like in 1989 and 1991, it is felt, the party will fall between two stools—not regaining the conservative Hindu constituency it has lost to the BJP and further alienating the Muslim voter after December 6, 1992.

To portray the Congress as a casualty of Ayodhya and nothing more, would be to present a specious argument. The party started slipping years before the "disputed structure" became the political factor it still is. The process of internal weakening has been impairing the party's

electoral performance gradually; the winter of 1993 could merely see the logical conclusion of this.

Despite the pessimism among many of its supporters, the Congress still commands substantial support in the Northern states. As such, apart from in UP, the party has a reasonable chance of at least sharing power in the three other states and in Delhi.

What the Congress lacks is organisational cohesiveness. After the first generation of independent India's political leaders passed into history, the federal nature of the Congress, and that of the national polity, began to get perverted.

Therefore, under Mrs Indira Gandhi for example, the Congress came to depend on the appeal and charisma of its supreme leader to win even state level elections. The administrative potential or political stature of local leaders became irrelevant.

Large states such as UP and MP came to possess a small pool of senior Congress leaders who were manipulated by the omnipotent "high command." Depending on contemporary political equations, this pack was shuffled and leaders were sent to the state capital or brought to New Delhi as the situation demanded.

At election time, of course, all good men came to the aid of the party and all acrimony disappeared as victory at the hustings became imperative. It has been in keeping with the quirky nature of the Congress that despite its many factions its leaders retain a strange loyalty to the mother party, and this is evident on the eve of elections.

Whether intra-Congress warring stopped due to a venal truce or due to more dignified reasons or due to the fear of the "dynasty" is unimportant. In political terms it paid dividends.

The Congress's pre-election games became obvious to even the most casual political observer after a certain point. Nevertheless, the farce continued.

In late 1984, for instance, Mr N.D. Tiwari and Mr V.P. Singh were sent to Lucknow as, respectively, chief minister and state Congress president. Everybody knew that when the impending Lok Sabha and assembly elections were over, and had hopefully been won, these leaders would be back in New Delhi.

This is exactly what happened. Mr Singh becamer Rajiv Gandhi's finance minister and a few months later, his task of winning the assembly elections having been accomplished, Mr Tiwari relinquished charge as chief minister and rejoined work in the national capital.

Dishonest and risky as this formula might have been, it worked. A persuasive state leadership, autonomous within the parameters set by the central party, managed to win elections, whatever the opposing alliances and whatever the odds. Delicate at the best of times, the system stands in ruins today—and this is what is worrying the Congress.

Quite certainly this failure is a result of time taking its toll on a weary mechanism. However, there is an immediate stimulus as well, in the form of Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao. Whatever their insecurities—and they had more than their fair share—the Gandhis, mother and son, allowed a second rung leadership in the states to prosper, albeit within limits. These leaders were never allowed to command the influence or authority to effectively challenge the party president. However, they were granted the requisite capacity to control their fiefdoms and, in the manner of feudal barons, pay tribute in the form of seats at election time, workers at rally time and money at all times.

The system met with a jolt with the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. At one level, Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao's selection as party president and prime minister was in the true traditions of Westminster: a veteran in public life, he truly was "first among equals."

The Congress, however, turned its back on such niceties many elections ago. Despite a promising start, Mr Rao's reign has not seen the revival of federalism in the Congress. Far from striving for a collegial structure, Mr Rao has been busy trying to consolidate his authority. The easiest route to his consolidation has been the undermining of his rivals.

Thus over the past two years, those in a position to be projected as strong and undisputed leaders of the Congress in the states have been sought to be reduced to mere factional chieftains. This had had potent results in the North, where the Congress has poor legislative representation and where strenuous efforts is needed.

The Congress unit in MP has fallen victim to this policy of "sabotage thy neighbour." Ideally, the Congress should have stood a good chance of grasping the reins of power in Bhopal again. That despite its best efforts to defeat itself the Congress still rates its chances in MP as high speaks volumes for the nature of the BJP there.

By all accounts, Mr Sundarlal Patwa's government was the poorest of the four BJP administrations which were dismissed in December 1992. To compound matters, the BJP in MP is a house divided, if not riven.

All the Congress needed to do was present a united front and fight the elections under a seemingly strong leader. While Mr Arjun Singh had the credentials for this task, he had written one angry letter too many to Mr Rao. If Mr Singh was given command of the party's resources in MP, it would weaken Mr Rao. If Mr Singh then won the Congress a majority in MP, he would become an even more dangerous challenger to Mr Rao.

Thus the Congress' campaign in Madhya Pradesh is being controlled by the Shukla brothers, S.C. and V.C. Mr V.C. Shukla's proximity to the prime minister or ideological dexterity might not be in doubt but his ability to galvanise the party certainly is.

The situation in UP is very similar. Though it can be argued that even a man with as formidable a record as Mr N.D. Tiwari's could not have helped the Congress regain lost ground, the point is he was not given a free hand. He was only allowed to hold rallies when it was felt Mr Arjun Singh was organising too many meetings in UP for the prime minister's comfort.

Under Mr Rao, the Congress has become even more arid with regard to producing good leadership than it was. That

among the party's chief campaigners for the 1993 assembly elections are men like Mr Sitaram Kesri and Mr Rajesh Pilot reflects this situation.A leadership percolating from above can present a facade of stability; unfortunately for the Congress it cannot win elections. The Congress needs lifeblood; Mr Rao and his cohorts are not the appropriate donors.

* Congress Advised to 'Prepare Own Epitaph'

94AS0046C Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 5 Oct 93 p 8

[Editorial: "The Party Is Over"]

[Text] Mr Narasimha Rao's call to former Congressmen to rejoin the parent organization will only attract rootless politicians for whom any party is good enough before the onset of elections. There are hardly any Congressmen with the moral stature or mass support who do not already belong to the Janata Dal or the Bharatiya Janata Party. Mr Arif Mohammed Khan's name is being mentioned as a likely entrant. Mr Khan enjoys an impeccable reputation but that is unlikely to translate into votes or even allow him to overcome the objections of the Muslim hardliners in the party. Mr Rao's call is timed with an eye to the elections and the temporary political oblivion of his chief adversary, Mr Arjun Singh. Having wrapped the issue of deciding the nominations for the Assembly elections, Mr Rao calculates that induction of the prodigals will enthuse the ordinary party workers and bolster the impression the Congress(I) is on the winning track. He is in danger of upsetting his own apple cart. Even the most diehard Congressman realizes that the Prime Minister is saddled with liabilities due largely to his unwillingness to deal with corruption in high places. Regional party leaders go out of their way to ensure he does not turn up in their constituencies. Between Palani, Ootapalam and Chowringhee, the Congress has been losing ground in its strongholds. In Uttar Pradesh, the party is in danger of being relegated to the category of also-rans with the BJP, the Janata Dal and the Mulayam Singh-Kanshi Ram combine threatening to carve out the epicentre of power among themselves. Its once secure base in Madhya Pradesh has been eaten away by the Bahujan Samaj Party forcing it to pander to Mr Kanshi Ram's considerable ego. The southern base is restive with Mr Rao's trouble-shooters, Mr K. Karunakaran and the beleaguered Mr Veerappa Moily distancing themselves from the high command. Should Mr Karunakaran turn hostile Mr Rao will have on his hands a better equipped enemy than Mr Arjun Singh. The Prime Minister's new set of confidantes begins to look distressingly similar to those whom Rajiv Gandhi chose to have around him and they regularly let him down.

With a group of discredited politicians rescued from oblivion now invited to complement it, the ruling party might as well prepare its own epitaph. If the Congress(I) suffers a humiliating defeat, as is likely, the torrent of dissidence will become unstoppable. Mr Arjun Singh is not likely to be the logical successor, Mr Karunakaran has a better chance with the large proportion of M.P.s from the South. That explains the listlessness of the wily Thakur leader and his willingness to accept Mr Rao's continuance in office. While the peace that has descended on the Congress(I) is illusory, there is no denying that by jettisoning Mr Rao the country will have to take the risk of scuttling reforms as his replacement will veer towards reckless populism to neutralize opposition. India, as much [as] its Prime Minister, is caught in a bind.

BJP

* BJP Challenge for National Power Seen Very Serious

93AS1000J Calcutta SUNDAY in English 3 Jul 93 pp 60-63

[Article by Gauri Lankesh: "Second Yatra"]

[Text]

The Bharatiya Janata Party elects L. K. Advani as its president, redefines its role and sets new priorities. But is the party ready to make a serious bid for power at the Centre?

Unusual situations demand extraordinary measures. The national council of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) met in Bangalore recently even as a major political crisis gripped the ruling Congress(I) government at the Centre following discredited stock broker Harshad Mehta alleging that he had paid the Prime Minister of the country Rs 1 crore as pay-off. The BJP, the largest Opposition party, was quick to adjust itself to the changed scenario, and at the end of the six-day deliberations, a new avatar of the BJP, a more sober alternative to the congress was very much in sight. Though BJP leaders didn't exactly cast away the saffron robe, they significantly toned down their Ram rhetoric and set new priorities for a party which was geared up to face the people.

With the change of focus and priority, came the change of guard: L. K. Advani took over as president of the party from Murli Manohar Joshi. And in his second stint at the helm of affairs in the BJP, Advani is faced with the enviable task of leading the party to a decisive victory in the next parliamentary polls.

Advani's election as the BJP president—his candidature was backed by leaders of the *sangh parivar* and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)—essentially seeks to drive home two messages. Firstly, that the party has more or less decided to project Advani as its prime ministerial candidate. And secondly, if the BJP was perceived to be moving away from the RSS during the Joshie, Advani will now ensure that the two organisations come closer to each other.

Although Advani is widely regarded as a moderate by his political rivals, he is as hard core as any RS hard-liner. No wonder the *sangh parivar* enthusiastically backed his candidature for the top job in the BJP. Prophets of doom have long held that ultimately sadhus and sants would take control spelling the death of the BJP, but not many partymen seem perturbed about that possibility.

Govind Acharya said, "All of us are bred in the same nationalist moorings of the RSS. The organisations of the *sangh parivar* have very symbolic relationship. But the BJP

is the political wing which is being steered to its destination of gaining control of the Centre."

However, Pramod Mahajan, one of the more vocal general secretaries of the BJP, dismissed the suggestion that the RSS will now play a greater role in the affairs of the BJP. "We are part of the ideological *parivar*, but the BJP does not go by the political judgements of the RSS. In fact, they go by ours. So, there is no fear of the RSS taking over the BJP."

That L. K. Advani would take over the reins of power from Joshi was a foregone conclusion and the single-most important reason behind the crucial decision was his popularity among the people. As one partyman put it: "Advani is the party's most popular leader and he is a great crowd-puller. This should help the party because the possibilities of mid-term elections being called this year are high. Electing Advani is like putting our best foot forward."

And the times couldn't have been better for the tooth-brush-moustached hero of the Rath Yatra to lead the party. Earlier this month, the P. K. Bahri tribunal struck down the ban on the RSS and the Bajrang Dal. While this caused great embarrassment to the Congress, the judgement gave more strength to the BJP's demand that the party's governments in the four states that were dismissed after the 6 December demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya be reinstated. As if this shot in the arm was not enough, the party also fared well in the recent by-elections, boosting the morale of its cadres. And to top it all, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao suddenly found himself in the midst of a Rs 1 crore pay-off scandal.

But before the BJP can gain political capital out of these issues, Advani has at least three important tasks before him. First, he will have to set his house in order and rid the party of intense factionalism—the hallmark of the previous Joshi regime. Only then perhaps can Advani set about to regain the popularity whipped up by his Rath Yatra but frittered away by Joshi's much-ridiculed Ekta Yatra. But most important, the new president must work towards changing the popular image of the BJP as "a Muslim-bashing party of upper-caste Hindus." Only then can the men in saffron make a serious bid for power at the Centre.

What role will Joshi have in all of this? Though the former BJP chief has indicated that he would like to go back to his teaching profession at the Allahabad University, the speculation within the party is that he will be put in charge of training fresh recruits. Whatever be the decision, one thing is certain: Joshi, who did not exactly endear himself to his partymen during his two-year tenure, will certainly find himself out in the cold under Advani's new dispensation.

But for a disciplined and ideology-based party like the BJP, the fortunes of one individual hardly makes a difference. More important was which direction the party would take under Advani. And the deliberations at the Bangalore session indicated loud and clear that the BJP was willing to look beyond Ayodhya and Hindutva. Significantly, the Ram Janmabhoomi issue, the sole elecplank of the party so far, was hardly given any importance. In fact, only one paragraph of Advani's 24-page address to the delegates was devoted to the subject. It was almost as if he had mentioned it in passing.

Later, however, Advani denied that his party played down the Hindutva issue at the session. "For the last three years, we have been accused of being a one-issue party," he told SUNDAY. "Whatever we do, we are still accused of it. If anyone thinks we played down the Hindutva card, we can't help it," the newly-elected BJP president added.

Advani pointed out that his party was caught in a strange situation. When the BJP talked of Ayodhya, it was dubbed a "temple-building" party, and when it didn't, it was accused of putting the Ayodhya issue on the back-burner. But, he claimed, the issue was related to "the unity of the country, nationalism, secularism and Hindu-muslim harmony." Advani even justified the destruction of the Babri Masjid saying, "When Hanuman was sent to Lanka to search for Sita, he burnt down Lanka. Does anyone blame him for doing it?"

Advani said that the first task before his party was to dispel the "deliberately circulated campaign of calumny and disinformation about the BJP." This he stressed could be achieved by "bringing out the party's resolutions on the political situation, the agriculture sector and the social charter."

If the BJP today is not concentrating on Ram Janmabhoomi, it is because the party has at last realised that in the changed scenario after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, Ram alone is not enough to lead the party to a decisive electoral victory. As party secretary Pramod Mahajan explained, "The credit for building the temple at Ayodhya is BJP's alone and no other party can take credit for it. The issue is almost settled. It raised the nation's conscience and the disputed structure no longer exists. Eighty per cent of the work has been accomplished and there is no point in harping on it anymore."

There is, of course, a more compelling reason. Whatever be the BJP's public pronouncements, many of its leaders felt that the outrage at Ayodhya and the events after that have alienated the more tolerant Hindus from the party's fold. And Advani and his men think that the BJP should shed some of its radicalism if it is to woo them back. "We now have to give a package deal which will appeal to all," is how Mahajan would like to put it.

Advani and the BJP's national council spelt out that "deal" in a number of resolutions. The political resolution spoke about the corruption—Harshad Mehta's allegation that P. V. Narasimha Rao took one crore rupees from him—in the ruling Congress(I) and how the party had failed to provide a government that delivers. The resolution even demanded Lok Sabha polls to get the country out of the present mess.

That the BJP under Advani was determined to broadbase its image from being just a party of "Hindu fanatics" was clear by the numerous references to the minorities, especially Muslims, in its resolutions. The feeling is that the

party deliberately took a more 'tolerant' line with an eye to the elections. But significantly, there was no remorse over the 6 December incident.

It may be recalled that the RSS general secretary, H. V. Sheshadri, recently accused political and religious leaders of dividing Hindus and Muslims and urged the minorities to work together with the RSS.

At the Bangalore meeting, Advani spoke in the same vein. He said: "I would urge the Muslims not to see us through the tinged glasses of our adversaries, but to judge us by our track."

One of the more important resolutions was related to the agricultural sector. Listing a number of measures needed to save the arming community and opposing the Dunkel Draft proposals on the patenting of seeds, the resolution was clearly aimed at wooing the voters in the rural areas.

Some of the other resolutions concerned electoral and economic reforms, liberalisation, small-scale industries, the *swadeshi*concept for self-reliance and foreign policy. There was also the usual harangue over the Punjab situation and the withdrawal of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

All this clearly indicates that the BJP is aiming at projecting itself as an viable alternative to the Congress, a party capable of looking beyond Ayodhya. "Elections to four state Assemblies are coming up and we have to build towards it," pointed out Mahajan. "That is even if we do not consider the possibility of a general election being called soon," he added.

The Assembly polls are going to be crucial tests for the party. "Earlier if we lost a couple of elections, it did not matter much. But now, when we want to stake our claim to the centre, we simply cannot afford to lose any," argued Mahajan.

But to ensure this, Advani will first have to clean up the BJP. For, during Joshi's tenure the party, which once seemed free of groupism, had been a divided house. This had eroded its image of a united party with a purpose.

There has been much concern over this among the leaders. Kedar Nath Sahani, the party vice-president, said that in the recent organisational elections, "individual ambition had got the better of some people which had led to squabbles and fights. Such incidents can weaken the party and we have to look within ourselves to sort it out."

Calling itself a party with a difference, the BJP is clearly geared up for the polls. "We are the natural choice," Advani declared, adding, "but we do not wish to be the people's choice only by default. We will give a corruption-free, violence-free and riot-free government."

How far he will succeed is yet to be seen. But for now, Advani and the BJP have got their agenda ready: "a clear victory."

* BJP Seen Seizing the Anti-Corruption Issue

93AS1033C Calcutta SUNDAY in English
10 Jul 93 pp 8-10

[Article by Aditi Phadnis: "Ram Takes the Back Seat"]

[Text] Is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) changing its colour? At its national council meeting in Bangalore (18-21 June), the party decided to do with less of saffron and focus more on the darker aspects of national politics. In short, it is now going to rely less on Ram, the Ram Temple and Hindutva while crusading against corruption that pervades the present political system.

And to show that it is serious about a thorough clean-up, the party has, to begin with, identified donations to political parties as the fountainhead of all ills that affect the polity.

This, in a way, is not surprising. The BJP adopted this tactic to capitalise on the allegations of a Rs 1 crore pay-off made by stock broker Harshad Mehta. The Bombay Big Bull claims that he gave that money to Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao on 4 November, i.e., on the eve of the Lok Sabha by-election at Nandyal, from where Rao was elected to Parliament.

Although Mehta had not been implicated in the stock market scam at the time he claims he made the payment, the BJP leadership hopes to gain political mileage by suggesting that the Congress had been fighting elections, in which fortunes are spent, with tainted money.

The BJP expects to put the Congress and other political outfits in a spot by demanding that all political donations should, henceforth, be made in cheques so as to facilitate financial scrutiny. Clearly, the party believes that the other outfits will develop cold feet on this issue and thus expose themselves as a bunch of crooks, tilting the popular preference overwhelmingly in the BJP's favour.

In other words, the nation can expect less of saffron and red tilaks. Finally, the BJP seems to have conceded that secular issues and not religious fanaticism agitates the public mind, at least for the time being.

This change in the BJP's tactical emphasis will have several consequences down the line. What will, for instance, be the impact of this new agenda on the BJP's relationship with the militant Bajrang Dal, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak (RSS)—the three other members of the sangh parivar? Could this lead to tension between the members of the saffron family, especially at the time of handing out the goodies?

Indeed, the change of image that the BJP is trying to undergo, might make the party more acceptable to the electorate, especially the moderate Hindu, but is likely to leave its allies in the lurch. So it might be premature to believe that the party's crusade against corruption is going to be its sole campaign plank even in the short run. Observers say that it is only a matter of time before the militant, Hindu fundamentalist elements catch up with it.

But some party leaders insist that Ram has certainly been left behind, at least for the moment. "It is like the British general who was made the Prime Minister during the War. But he was a hopeless failure as a peacetime Prime Minister and he lost the election immediately afterwards. The Bajrang Dal and the VHP had a historic role. That role is now over," said a functionary.

A harsh judgment, but the party feels it is necessary to send out this message unambiguously. As of now, the BJP expects elections to be held in October and believes that it must come to power to bring about a "social transformation." "The movement for the [Ram] Temple might have strengthened our case and unified the party. But it is now important to carry all sections with us and to impress upon the nation that we have the capacity to govern," explained a party worker.

In fact, the party is prepared to go a few steps further away from its beaten path to make this point. In its "eagerness" to "carry all sections," the BJP is now even willing to accommodate the Muslims, who had been systematically stigmatised by the party earlier.

"I admit that there are people/sections in the party who think that when the BJP comes to power, all Muslims will be thrown out of the country and sent to Pakistan," said an influential member who preferred anonymity. "This is just not true. We can't let that happen. We are bound by the Constitution," he added.

To further prove the BJP's growing secular concerns, the member explained: "That is why Advaniji, in his speech, said that the Ram Mandir will become a Bharat Mandir—which is nothing but a reconstituted India."

But above everything else, freeing politics of corruption will be the BJP's theme slogan during the next few months. "We have been under pressure for some time to show that we are different from the Congress," confessed Jagadish Shettigar, a member of the BJP executive. "And this is the best way to do it. Advaniji's declaration that the BJP will accept funds only through cheques is evidence that we are serious about this."

Advani's declaration that the BJP will henceforth accept only cheques as contributions has made even partymembers speculate about the viability of the scheme. No BJP functionary questioned by SUNDAY could clearly explain what their president really meant.

Till now, several points remain unclarified. Does Advani's declaration mean cash wouldn't be accepted at all? Not quite. Again, does payment by cheque preclude corruption? Does it mean that the BJP wouldn't mind malpractices so long as they were done through cheques?

"Well, Advaniji will explain what he means," Shettigar said sheepishly when confronted with such queries.

The BJP's sudden change of tack at the Bangalore meet, which coincided with Harshad Mehta's revelations on 16 June, tends to suggest that the party believes what the broker has said. But that is not necessarily true.

"You must remember that Ram Jethmalani and Harshad Mehta have no credibility in our eyes. If we backed Advaniji's demand that Mehta be given political protection in return for naming those whom he paid money to, it was only because we wanted to get to the bottom of the missing Rs 5,000 crore," said a member.

Irrespective of whether Mehta is lying or telling the truth, the BJP is going to focus on him, for, it says, Mehta is a typical product of the Congress' political culture in which corruption and patronage flourishes.

"The cheque payment suggestion was a challenge to other parties. Let them come out and say they too support the suggestion. At this moment, the BJP can say it made the suggestion first," bragged an officer-bearer. Shettigar added: "Ram has reached a pitch. Today, whether we talk about Ram or not, we are identified with the cause. So Advaniji has begun to move away from Ram. All his platform meetings were about corruption in high places. Then came Mehta's disclosures and Jethmalani's promise of two more pieces of evidence. This is now our plank."

But the BJP's attack is not going to be unidirectional. It would not allow any space to other Opposition parties such as the Janata Dal or the leftists in the anti-corruption campaign. In fact, it is planning to make selective targets of them as well.

So while the Congress will remain the BJP's target of attack at the Centre, in West Bengal, it will be Jyoti Basu and in Bihar, Laloo Prasad Yadav. "We want to focus on personalities rather than on parties. That is the way to demolish the parties. It also makes the attack seem more credible in the public eye. We will have one national level charge-sheet followed by state level charge-sheets," said a party executive.

There is no way of knowing what course Indian politics is going to take in the coming months. The situation, with the Big Bull on the charge, is exceedingly fluid. But one thing is clear that the BJP is going to play a big role in determining the shape of things to come.

* BJP Said to Have Market on Mandir, Mandal Issues

93AS1042B New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 10 Jul 93 p 10

[Article by Ram Bahadur Ray: "BJP Has Both Mandir and Mandal in the Bag"]

[Text] New Delhi, 9 July—Former Chief Minister Kalyan Singh is saying with full confidence that Uttar Pradesh is in the BJP's [Bharatiya Janata Party] pocket over both the temple and Mandal issues. His confidence was increased by the social resolution passed in the Bangalore convention. He believes that the backward castes and groups will also give full support to the BJP during the next elections.

Kalyan Singh has played a major role in forming BJP social policy. In a lengthy conversation with JANSATTA, he said that the BJP's social policy is based on equality and warmth. According to him, the other parties encourage conflict instead of social justice. Can one provide justice by dividing society? His answer to this question is as follows.

"The political vested interests are being protected in the name of social justice." He says that the BJP's social policy is comprehensive. This is a policy that does not divide society, but spreads justice. They are supporting social justice in an appropriate manner. He gave details of the BJP's formula.

Kalyan Singh says that the Constitution must be amended in order to implement the BJP reservations policy. The reason for this is that various groups will combine to require 60 percent reservations. He wants the government to announce that government jobs will be reserved for these groups retroactively. He does not believe that the BJP has made a new decision in Bangalore. All it did was to clarify its policy. In the former convention, they just talked about principles. This time, more practical aspects were brought to light. He is confident that the BJP will become very attractive to the backward castes and tribes because of it. He commented that the Mandal issue is not anyone's property.

He also points to the basis of his confidence. Kalyan Singh had public meetings in 50 of the 63 districts of Uttar Pradesh. He talked about the temple and Mandal in every meeting. He remembered that his audience enthusiastically supported his reasoning about the temple and Mandal. Is the BJP trying to establish a new identity in Uttar Pradesh? He responded to this question by saying that the BJP is proving that it is not a party without programs. Kalyan Singh is very strong on the social issue, because his opponents have doubts about the BJP. He is working continuously to remove this concern. He says that the BJP does not support the caste system, and that it considers its practice of untouchability a social crime. He made announcements in his meeting that the BJP government will follow the Constitution. He wanted to say that the BJP would not run the government by following the Manusmirti or the Shariat.

Kalyan Singh believes that the Samajvadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party are building castles in the air. In Uttar Pradesh, the Janata Dal factions, Samajvadi Party, The Bahujan Samaj Party, and the Congress Party are trying to become number two after the BJP. None of these parties are fighting the BJP. They are fighting for their own existence. The Janata Dal (A), in Kalyan Singh's opinion, is moving toward merging with Congress. "I wish all parties would unite. If that is not possible, then they should form fronts. This would lead to a clear polarization." Kalyan Singh hopes that if all anti-BJP group parties unite to fight the election, then the other myth about Uttar Pradesh will also be broken.

Is there a possibility of elections in Uttar Pradesh? Kalyan Singh estimates that there will be Vidhan Sabha elections in November. It is possible that the Lok Sabha elections will also be held at the same time. He argues that no political party will be willing to dig its own grave by helping the Congress Party postpone the elections. If any political party tries to do that, the people will not forgive it. He says that the BJP is preparing for both elections. He gave many examples to show that presidential rule was very corrupt. While mentioning the recent transfers, he said that Congress has started a new business, the industry of bribes. All of this is being done with the elections in mind. He wants to remind the Congress Party that elections cannot be won through the bureaucracy. Commenting on the actions of Uttar Pradesh's governor, Motilal Vora, he said that he is doing the state Congress president's job also.

The BJP is busy preparing for the by-elections. This is clear from Kalyan Singh's talks. Among the election issues, the Ram Temple issue is the most important one. In addition, a campaign is afoot to improve the BJP image through the other issues. Kalyan Singh says that until they start building the temple in Ayodhya, this issue will remain the most important election issue. The BJP has become a symbol of nationalism because of this issue, while the other parties represent the elusive secularism. He said that the shankaracharyas have taken the right step in this direction, and that it is the pressure of the people that has resulted in the fact that anyone who is coming forward because of the government's efforts to resolve this issue is taking the direction that the BJP pointed to in the first place. He believes that in the question of temple reconstruction, the VHP [Vishwa Hindu Parishad] and the sants who supported it cannot be ignored.

The BJP has started the process of selecting candidates for the election. The crowd of candidates is being screened out. Kalyan Singh says that there are three criteria: who wins, who is honest, and who fits appropriately in the social equation.

* Advani Interviewed on Secularism, Communalism

94AS0049F Calcutta SUNDAY in English
4 Sep 93 pp 38-42

[Lal Krishna Advani Interviewed by Nirmal Mitra: "Why Is It That the Minorities Did Not Support Gandhiji, Nehru or Patel?"; quotation marks as published]

[Excerpts] *Seldom did he look so worried. An otherwise unflappable president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Lal Krishna Advani, was anxious about the fate of the two Bills seeking to separate religion from politics—something he described as the banishment of religion from politics. The BJP had walked out of the parliamentary Joint Select Committee considering the matter, and was waiting for the government to dilute the Bills. But the government finaly extended the monsoon session to push the Bills through. Such methods were not going to keep an ascendant party from coming to power, Advani said. He spoke to* SUNDAY, *explaining his party's stand on the sundry charges levelled against it—prevarication on Ayodhya, alienating the minorities, failing to discipline the sadhus, et al—and whether "aggressive secularism" was an answer to communalism. Excerpts from the interview:*

SUNDAY: You have become president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for the third term. How do you assess your tenure?

Lal Krishna Advani: My party has steadily moved forward. In the past few years, it has acquired a place and position in public life, which has made a large section of the people

view it with great hope. But it is also true that those who do not agree with our viewpoint, a viewpoint which till a few years ago was thought to be peripheral, are extremely upset that this supposedly peripheral viewpoint has come to acquire centrestage. And, therefore, their reactions are sometimes intemperate, imbalanced.

In fact, among my own colleagues, I had very often recalled an article I had read about ten years ago in which it was stated that the BJP is a good party, comprising good men. But it will always remain on the margin.

The person gave a film analogy. It said that the BJP would always remain the 'A.K. Hangal of Indian politics': a good character actor, but who could not be at the centrestage. And, curiously, I have always said while recalling this that today no one regards the BJP as a side-actor. A large section of the people regard it as a hero. Our adversaries say, 'They are the villains, the *khal-nayaks*'.

Q: Is it your position that the BJP has differences but it never takes them beyond a point?

A: Not differences. I would say on any issue, say if you have two economists from the Marxist school, put them together and they will disagree. But in our case, because the impression built up for a long time has been of a monolithic structure, when they see that what A says is slightly different from what B says, then there is a "schism" because it makes good copy.

Q: But when it comes to an issue like the sadhus versus the liberals on the right of sadhus to carry on political agitations, it is more than just a difference of opinion. I mean, they very aggressively countered your statement.

A: Who countered my statement?

Q: Vinay Katiyar was emphatic that you have no right to speak for the sadhus.

A: That was because my statement was published in a wrong manner. I do not say that sadhus should have nothing to do with politics, I simply say that if there is any conception that the BJP is going to be dictated to, or controlled, by a body of sadhus, this is not correct. If we thought sadhus should have nothing to do with politics, why would we put up sadhus as candidates for the Lok Sabha?

Generally, we would not like them to go to the Lok Sabha and to the legislatures *en masse*. And therefore the number is very small. Even in 1989, this was an issue. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) became important in public life and politics even in 1989. But in 1991, they did not say, you put up our candidates.

I would not say that people in the film world or ex-servicemen or those in academics should keep their hands off politics. I would say that everyone who can contribute can come into politics. But I would not like the BJP, which is a political party essentially, to be controlled and guided by, say, an organisation of ex-servicemen.

Q: Or even a religious group.

A: Even a religious group. In fact, even with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Jan Sangh's relations and the BJP's relations have always been of this manner that no one dictates to anyone. We belong to the same ideological family.

Q: You mean that it is the RSS' ideology that dictates.

A: It dictates to both. And it's our interpretation. And I would say that in so far as public life and politics is concerned, those in the RSS would value my assessment and appraisal, and Vajpayee's assessment and appraisal of the political situation rather than vice versa.

Q: Because you are the political pundits?

A: Not pundits. But we are there. So they say, you know better,you know best.

Q: But then, the confusion arises when you make a bid for power.

A: That is why periodically we do meet. We discuss, why this, why that. We explain to them. Now, for example, this Bill on religion. The course of action has to be decided by the party. Even though it pertains to religion. How do we deal with it and what are the implications? And we keep on explaining to them, this is the implication and this is how we propose to deal with it.

Q: Since you say you would not like to place sadhus in the forefront of a political movement, why are you opposed to the separation of politics from religion?

A: I do not follow the question because I do not follow what is meant by the separation of religion and politics. What is being sought to be done is banishing religion from politics, which is wrong. What is right, according to me is (banning) abuse of religion from politics.

Q: And how would you define abuse of religion?

A: That is already provided in the law. And we have not sought to change that. It is a corrupt practice. In fact, I would say that even abuse of language, domicile and certainly casteism for politics is wrong. And these are already provided for in the law.

Q: Why then is the government bringing these Bills?

A: It is a clumsy but desperate effort to stop the growth of the BJP. I am opposed to any scheme providing for pre-emptive disqualification of candidates. And in this case it is aimed only at the BJP.

If a candidate commits any crime on earth, he can pass muster, he cannot be disqualified. But if he talks about the temple, maybe, the Congress will press for disqualification. And all parties, whatever they may say, even if they breed secession, cannot be deregistered. But there will be an application against the BJP, saying that it should be deregistered because it is using religion for politics. It is now clearly focused.

Q: But you are not against disqualification of people or parties after they have been found guilty of abusing religion?

A: That is provided for in the law. In fact, in Maharashtra, some MLAs have been disqualified on that basis.

Q: Do you think aggressive secularism is an answer to communalism?

A: I call it secular fundamentalism. It is rootless, it does not have roots in the soil of this country. Therefore, not only is it failing but it is strengthening our cause. It is making it more and more obvious to the people that what the BJP says is sound and correct.

An example is what has happened in Sahmat, in Ayodhya. After all, freedom of expression has been part of the country's tradition. Never has there been any attempt to curb the freedom. Very often, for example, the Arya Samaj's Satyarth Prakash has said many things about many acts of Hindu society which may have hurt the sentiments of these sections. But Satyarth Prakash was never objected to. That is the tradition of this country.

Q: Do you think that this tradition is being destroyed?

A: Yes. Not only that, but even a person who is an atheist, like Charwak, was described as a *rishi* in India. Now, all of a sudden, after Independence, people find that the government and the ruling political elite of this country has one standard in respect of Muslims and another in respect of Hindus.

Q: Why do you say that?

A: If there is a book by the name of *The Satanic Verses*, it is banned without even reading it. As far as I am aware, India is the only democratic country in the world where the book is banned.

No other democracy, even the place where it was printed and published, has banned it. We banned it, saying that it will hurt the sentiments of a section of the people. Well, I can understand the logic of it. India is a country which is different, and the law and order situation may be considered. But then, you will have to adopt the same approach to other sections also. You cannot have double standards.

Those very days, I remember, a book was published in Maharashtra by the name of *Riddles of Rama*. There was a hue and cry and people demonstrated that it be banned. Someone approached me and I said I was not in favour of banning. It is not the tradition of this country. Of course, those who are publishing it should take account of the sentiments of the people. But government should not be banning books merely because people disagree with them. But if that approach has to be adopted, it has to be done in respect of Salman Rushdie and *The Satanic Verses* also.

In the case of Sahmat, that holds good, too. If there is artistic freedom, it should be for all. Then Sonal Mansingh should not be maligned and pilloried for agreeing to perform at the VHP function in Washington.

Q: But isn't the Sahmat exhibit's portrayal of the Jataka myth of Ram and Sita as siblings an authentic one?

A: I do not know. But I think that in matters of this kind, those who talk about the sentiments of the people should regard the sentiments of the majority also.

Q: Why has your ideology brought about a feeling of alienation among all minorities?

A: Because the campaign of calumny and disinformation against us is really of a very high voltage. It is not easy to be able to face it. When we are projected to the people as being very vehement, uncompromising, fanatical, there is a section of people who think that if they are, it is a good thing. I don't like it. I don't feel happy about it.

Q: You don't think this characterisation is true?

A: The BJP's approach to problems relating to Hindu-Muslim relations is very balanced, tempered and sober. Whereas the manner in which our adversaries project us is creating a reaction in society and in the masses about which I do not feel happy.

Q: But why have you allowed it to come to this stage?

A: What can I do about our adversaries?

Q: But you were in power in Uttar Pradesh when the Babri Masjid was demolished.

A: It was demolished because the government kept on putting obstructions, because the judiciary kept on procrastinating. The consequent exasperation of the people led to the demolition. And the demolition did not hurt us politically. I felt unhappy. The demolition affected our image abroad, and that too, by the manner in which it was projected.

There were demolitions of temples in Britain. Did the leaders of Britain beat their breasts about it and say what kind of government do we have? In this small place we cannot protect temples of Hindus. They did not go about beating their breasts in the manner we did when a structure was pulled down—a structure about which a case is pending in the law courts since 1949.

Q: But why didn't you let the law take its course?

A: I kept on pleading with the PM that we want nothing except that the Government of India go to the Allahabad High Court and request it to give its judgement before 6 December 1992. Arguments were over, judgement awaited and more than a month in between.

The government says no, why should we do it? You are caught in a legal tangle. I said if the court decides for or against us, the tangle would be over. Construction work will regularly start from the place of foundation stone-laying.

If that had happened, no one would have looked at the structure. You did not permit that, the consequence is this. Something that we did not plan for, we hoped would not happen and tried to prevent, but we failed.

Q: So now you are blaming it on circumstances?

A: No, not because of circumstances, not because of circumstances. I say it was because of the Government of India. Because they felt, *accha,jhagra to insey hona hi hai,* structure *to hataingey* (There is bound to be a fight with these people, and they will remove the structure). They will

pass a law and remove it. Why allow them to do that? And, therefore, if there is a showdown, let it take place.

And the consequence is that, today, a large section of people among the masses are not very concerned about the rule of law, just as when there was a revolt in the navy against the Britishers, Gandhiji may have felt unhappy about it, but the masses in the country felt happy. *Angrez ke khilaf ladai ho gayi, accha hua* (It's good that a fight began against the English). So that kind of feeling was there in the masses even about this. And today we have had even thinkers like V.S. Naipaul or Nirad C. Chaudhuri fully justifying the event and saying that for the first time, a sense of history is developing among the Hindus.

Q: This is a somewhat creative interpretation of what Naipaul actually said in his interview to THE TIMES OF INDIA.

He accepted that the passion he saw among those who climbed atop the structure to demolish it was real.

A: He virtually justified it. That a sense of history is developing in Hindus is his phrase. Of course, Nirad has totally justified it. Nirad is Nirad (*smiles*).

Q: You can't really use Nirad Chaudhuri's approval to deny that you have alienated the minorities.

A: I deny that. See the whole history. Even before Partition, why is it that the minorities did not support Gandhiji, Nehru or Sardar Patel? Why is it that they supported the Muslim League? Since then, we should have learnt a lesson, and after Independence we should have somewhat corrected our attitudes and realised that appeasement will never pay. Be just. Be fair. Guarantee security. But no special rights. This should be the approach.

If that had been the approach, we would not have had these problems. And today, the problems have become accentuated because even the commitment to the culture of this country, which leaders like Gandhiji, or Patel or Rajendra Babu or others had at that time, is no longer there. No one to fight for *Vande Mataram*. Now we have everyone apologetic about Ram Rajya. Ram *ki baat choro* (Forget about worshipping Ram). Now they hurl the same epithets at us which the Muslim League used to hurl at them when Gandhiji used to have *Ram Dhun* in his meetings.

Q: Do you really believe that there is no alienation?

A: If there is alienation, as in Kashmir, it is alienation not from Hindus but from India. These realities must be borne in mind. So far as we are concerned, we believe that after 6 December, there are sections among the Muslims who think that the BJP has not deceived them at any time. The BJP governments have guaranteed us security, the BJP has been forthright in saying what it believes and acts accordingly. It has said that we would like this structure to be removed, shifted, we would like to do it reverentially, respectfully, because at one time there was a mosque here.

Q: Guaranteed security? The Kalyan Singh government violated that precept by breaking a promise it made in an affidavit to the Supreme Court that it would not allow the mosque to be destroyed.

A: They did not violate it. The moment they found themselves unable to save it except by use of force...bullets, they said we will not fire upon them and the CM resigned. All along he had said, *Main koi goli nahi chalaoonga* (I will not fire). Mulayam Singh *ne chala ke dekhi thi* (Mulayam had seen the results of that).

Q: The BJP has always been considered solidly united. But that impression has changed with talk of differences between you and Vajpayee.

A: All pointless. Whoever becomes the president is regarded as being narrow-minded. When Joshiji was president, he was seen as narrow-minded, and I was the liberal. Absolutely pointless.

Q: But then, he apologised for the demolition.

A: I expressed my regrets. Perhaps those days nothing was printed. Sheshadriji, Ashok Singhal, myself, Joshiji issued a joint statement that evening regretting the happening. [passage omitted]

* BJP Said Identifying Election Theme

93LA228B New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi
5 Sep 93 pp 1, 10

[Article by Pradip Singh: "BJP Needs a Theme But What Will it Be?"]

[Text] New Delhi, 4 September—The BJP is looking for ways to improve its own and its president's image. It is worried that all the issues it raised after the 6 December incident did not interest the people. It held a two-day conference in the parliamentary cell to discuss how to present itself better to the people. This conference was attended by the party chiefs of the state, media heavyweights, and some journalists who had been working with the party for some time.

The inauguration speech for this conference was delivered by Party President Lal Krishna Advani. On the first day, Mr. Murli Manohar Joshi, and on the second day, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, gave speeches. The resolution of the main problem was not agreed upon during the two-day meeting; however, they did discuss some main issues related to the Vidhan Sabha elections in the four states. If some of the suggestions presented under the title of a media workshop are implemented, the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] would have to change its essential character.

The decision to hold a media workshop was made at the Bangalore convention. Party President Lal Krishna Advani wanted to discuss this issue at length to make an effective program. Seven papers were read at this workshop, in addition to some impromptu speeches.

The BJP is worried that its issues are not being bought by the people. In the Calcutta meeting of the party, it raised the issues of defense of the country and its citizens and of Bangladeshi infiltrators. In the Bangalore convention, it raised the issue of corruption and declared that it would start a campaign against it. Even the party workers were

not active about this issue, much less getting endorsement from the people. The three-month plan of the campaign was never even started.

The party advisors believe that the party must improve its image and emerge as a liberal democratic party, for it is important that it raise another issue than the Ayodhya issue. The party has failed in this effort. In the media workshop, veteran English journalist T.V.R. Shenoy also read a paper. We can get some idea about the direction the party is taking if we examine that paper. He explained the weakness in the party, saying that the elections in the four states are taking place because of the Ayodhya issue. If the party wins, then its Hindu color will become even darker. If this happens, then it should be ready for the whole world to publish news about India following Khomeyni's path. The BJP has not been able to clean up its image of Hindi, Hindus, and Hindustan. Because of Ayodhya, its victory in elections in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh will not increase its votes in other states.

In order to get more press coverage for the party, many suggestions were made. A review of these suggestions makes us think that they are not for a political party, but for a large, commercial corporation. Mr. Shenoy suggests that the political parties do not know how to present a press package. They must learn from the Nestle, SBCB, and Proctor and Gamble companies, who spend lakhs of rupees on packaging their products. The top leaders are sent out on election tours; however, the second and third level leaders are left to man the party headquarters.

Mr. Shenoy suggested that young men with computer skills should work with persons with marketing skills for this purpose. When information is given to foreign journalists about the leaders' trips, all information about the air and rail itineraries must be given. Press announcements should be printed appropriately; ordinary computer printouts are of lower quality. We must buy Apple Macintosh computers and laser printers. Most of the journalists have a working knowledge of English; therefore, it is not necessary to emphasize that they speak Hindi. However, translations into French, German, Arabic, Spanish, and Japanese must be arranged.

They made two suggestions for increasing information for journalists. One suggestion was made by Madhu Deolkar, who said that it is not appropriate to practice discrimination, and that all journalists should receive the same information. Mr. Dinanath Misra suggested that some information should be leaked out only to selected people, which would be more effective. Mr. Arun Jetli also detailed the issues that should be used in the Vidhan Sabha election. Mr. Pramod Mahajan gave details of how to deal with the electronic media for propaganda.

The suggestions made in this workshop raise questions as to which direction the party wants to go. In the Bangalore convention, the party decided that it would accept money for the election funds only by check. In addition, this party supports the idea of reducing election expenses. However, the methods and approaches the party is going to adopt are very expensive. Where will it get the money for propaganda on cable TV, ZTV, and Star TV? If the BJP can raise that much money, then will it not have to make various compromises? The lower echelon of the party is raising such questions. Will the BJP depend more on the propaganda machinery than its own workers? How will it stand against the Congress Party in this race? The Congress has much more fund raising capability than the BJP.

Then there is the question of how much the election benefits will be as a result of this high-tech propaganda. In the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP used this approach fully. What results were there from it? The supporters of this propaganda approach give the example of Rajiv Gandhi's 1984 election. The Congress Party used the electronic media and a company called Reddy Fusion in that election. Declaring that the Congress was successful because of this propaganda approach is not correct, because all these efforts could not get the Congress Party even half the seats in 1989 that it had in 1984.

Those who oppose this approach say that votes are won by issues, and not by equipment. They argue that in 1991, the BJP used money against the Congress, and still got 119 seats. Meanwhile, the National Front and the Left Front, which had much fewer resources, got a total of 130 seats.

* BJP Said Inspiring Fear in Election Opponents

94AS0006A Varanasi AJ in Hindi 8 Sept 93 p 6

[Article by Dr. Baldevraj Gupta: "The Political Parties Are Afraid of BJP"]

[Text] The BJP knows well that the victory in elections in these states will also determine which party will rule at the Center. The revenge of the dismissal of its government in four states was introduction of the no-confidence motion. The BJP had hoped that the nation and the Congress (I) both would be rid of Narasimha Rao. All the opposition parties had supported the BJP. It was the Marxists who had introduced the motion, however, the whole opposition was in support of it. The BJP which fights the war of [Lord] Ram was surprised when Ram, Lakhan [Ram's younger brother], and Hanuman [his chief advisor] (Ram Lakhan Yadav and Munda) all climbed into Rao's lap. Rao's chair did quiver, but he did not fall from it. He will stay in power as long as the Congress (I) wants him to. Now it will be Mr. Rao again who will fight against the BJP in the elections to be hold in the four states. Arjun Singh has called himself the policeman of the Congress precinct. We do not have to tell you how [un]skilled the policemen of today are! It is possible that after the vidhan sabha elections, there are changes at the Center or the possibility of mid-term elections. At that time, some policemen will be promoted to the rank of sergeant.

Test Time for the Congress (I)

Sharad Pawar had made a major suggestion a while ago. [He had suggested] The Congress should support the political parties that can defeat the BJP instead of fighting the elections itself. Mulayam Singh Yadav, the president of the Samajwadi Party, was charmed by this idea. He met Mr. Rao and made sure that his party's and Bahujan Samaj

Party's members disappear at the time of the votes for no-confidence motion were taken. Under this strategy, Mr. Rao and the South do not want the Congress to be strong in U.P. They are also afraid of the BJP. However, if the Congress (I) is really weak in any of these four states, then it is in Uttar Pradesh. The Congress (I) has given up all hopes of forming a government there. Mr. Rao has to deal with the challenge in U.P. in order to help Congress (I) win the elections. The return of the Congress (I) in north India would be a message to Mr. Rao to pack his bags. If the Congress (I) losses then Mr. Rao's inept leadership and refutable statements would be exposed. At that time, the Congress leadership will not hesitate in asking Mr. Rao to relinquish his responsibilities. This would be the time for Arjun Singh to establish his superiority.

Depth of Hindutava

The BJP is the party to be feared in the four states where vidhan sabha elections will be held. However, the Janata Dal and V.P. Singh perhaps have this the last opportunity to prove their political strategies to be innocent. V.P. Singh's actions and speeches are proving costly to the Janata Dal and its leaders. How deep and influential is Lal Karishna Advani's Hindutava will also be tested. The BJP says that its victory in the four states would be a clear mandate from the people to rebuild Ram's temple. At that time a Hindu government will be installed at the Center also, because the BJP will force mid-term elections after winning the vidhan sabha elections. It does not matter that (Governor) Moti Lal Vora is touring the 63 districts in U.P. and announcing decisions to provide money for developmental projects, since he should have first checked if the government has the money in its treasury. What difference will it make? The position of the Congress (I) has improved a little, though. However, only a magic lamp can assure victory for the Congress (I) in U.P. The Congress (I) has only one option if it wants to save its face, and that is to cooperate with the secular parties.

Heated Atmosphere in Uttar Pradesh

The BJP and the Samajwadi parties have been active in U.P. even before the formal announcements for holding elections are made. The BJP brings back the Ayodhya issue again and again. The BJP indirectly benefitted from various Congress activities such as the poster about agreement or Rao's announcement about submitting a charge sheet against those accused of the Ayodhya incident. The BJP is waiting for the Ayodhya case to reach the courts. According to Advani, "The Ayodhya case will give the BJP the opportunity to tell the world its story. This would be just like Subhash Chandar Bose Azad Hind Army case before the independence." The BJP blames the Ayodhya incident on delay of justice and government's negligence. It had mentioned all this in the white paper.

The BJP is also prepared to ask how then-home minister Rao could not send even one person involved in the 1984 riots and massacre against the Sikhs to jail. Mr. Rao was the home minister then and is the prime minister now. Why no charge sheet has been submitted about the bomb blast incidents in Bombay and Delhi? Why are the Hindus who calls themselves Hindu are threatened? This happens only in India and no where else. Why is it so?

Kalraj Mishar, the U.P. BJP chief, admits the fact that "if the opposition parties unite to fight the BJP then this would be the elections of revenge and no one will be able to win." The BJP is very active in Uttar Pradesh and applications from 600 prospective candidates are being considered now. The BJP leadership was involved in fighting the central government, how it is busy preparing for the elections. Workers are being trained at district, county, and block levels so that the task of collecting votes is done efficiently when the time comes.

Samajwadi Party

The Samajwadi Party has held about 80 public meetings under the leadership of Mulayam Singh Yadav in U.P. during the last 10 months. Mulayam Singh is confident that he will be the one to get the Muslim vote in Uttar Pradesh. V.P. Singh has always sympathized with the Muslims, however, his whole politics have focused on the caste system. In 1990, Mulayam Singh had protected the Babri Masjid, had blockaded the whole U.P., and angered the Hindus. V.P. Singh did not make even one announcement after the disputed structure was destroyed to help heal the Muslim wounds. V. P. Singh had ignored the mosque issue and raised the Mandal issue. This had made the Muslim issue unimportant. The Muslims are tired of V.P. Singh's escapist policies. Not only the Muslims, his own party people are tired of it.

The Muslims in Uttar Pradesh are in a dilemma. Their national leadership is also with the Hindus. When Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna had first cast his eyes on the Muslim vote bank, he had in one night made the person, who did nothing but sit on the stairs of Jama Masjid, the religious leader of all Muslims. Shahabbudin, who was once elected to the Rajya Sabha with the BJP support, cannot be the leader of the Muslims. They have to pick either V.P. Singh or Mulayam Singh. We shall see in which direction does the leader-less Muslim vote go. The Muslims would have supported the Congress if Arjun Singh was in command. The Muslim vote will play an important role in defeating the BJP and upsetting the balance.

Mulayam Singh's Strategy

These are some of the points in Mulayam Singh's strategy: First, defeat the BJP. Second, V.P. Singh's friendship could be most costly than his enmity. He is going to follow these. Third, even when the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party fail to win majority seats, he must make sure that his party is the largest party after the BJP so that he becomes the chief minister. He must form coalitions or cause break ups in order to establish a non-BJP government. They argue that V.P. Singh cannot comfort the Muslims in U.P. The other alternative to BJP in Uttar Pradesh is Mulayam Singh and Mulayam Singh only. Therefore, the other popular leader for the Muslims is Mulayam Singh. He has the votes of the lower castes and the Yadavs. The Harijans will vote for him through Kanshi Ram. All these votes will be deducted from the Janata Dal (A) and Janata Dal (B). If the elections are three- or

four-sided, the BJP will be triumphant. If it is three-sided, then no side will have a clear majority. If it is a straight match between the BJP and the non-BJP groups, the non-BJP group has more than 50 percent chance of winning even now.

The Kidney Politics

V.P. Singh has left Delhi because of doctors advice and his failing health. However, he could no stop his habit of making hay while the sun shines, and raised the slogan of not returning to Delhi until all the Mandal recommendations are implemented. Meanwhile, the Congress itself is eager to implement the Mandal recommendations before the elections. The fact is that both of V.P. Singh's kidneys are 75 percent ineffective. He looks pale and has been advised to avoid strains of long travel. He has strict orders to follow diet and take medication on time. His close associates say that Raja Sahib's [V.P.] kidneys are only 25 percent useful. During J.P.' s time, the kidney politics had proved to be very helpful. It is possible that the Janata Dal (B) will reap the benefits of this sickness. There is the offer to have Janata Dal (A) join it because Ajit's Janata Dal has a strong influence in western Uttar Pradesh politics.

Arjun Singh versus Arjun Singh

Both the Congress (I) and the BJP will become victims of the political instability in Rajasthan. Meanwhile, several Congressites are dreaming about becoming the chief minister. Jitendar Prasad wants Uttar Pradesh, Ahmed Patel wants Gujrat's, and Naval Kishore Sharma wants the chair of power in Rajasthan. We have to see what Balram Jakhad does to the political situation in Rajasthan. The Congress perhaps is not serious about the politics in Himachal Pradesh. Still, Vir Bhadar Singh will try to grab power from Shanta Kumar. The Congress (I) in Madhya Pradesh is divided. Shyamcharan Shukla cannot become chief minister even when the Congress (I) wins. It would be easier for Mr. Rao to send Arjun Singh back to Madhya Pradesh if he manages to form a Congress government in Madhya Pradesh by the party's unity and self-discipline. Just like Sharad Pawar, he will be ordered by the Congress president to go take care of the state. However, Arjun Singh does not want to become a chief minister again. He has made agreement with Rao through Karunakaran to allow him to make his own decision about the Madhya Pradesh politics. Form BJP chief minister, Sunder Lal Patwa, is a good friend of Arjun Singh. Arjun Singh wants the Congress (I) to win in Madhya Pradesh, but at the same time, he is also adamant on his plan to have a Harijan or an aborigine to be the chief minister there. The Congress (I) will raise the slogan of the next chief minister will be a Harijan in Madhya Pradesh.

These elections are for the four vidhan sabhas, however, these will have very serious and far-reaching effects on national politics and every political party.

* Advani: Results Will Precipitate Lok Sabha Elections

94AS0003K Madras INDIAN EXPRESS in English 18 Sep 93 p 8

[Text] Visakhapatnam—Bharatiya Janata Party President L.K. Advani on Friday said the outcome of the polls in the four states formerly ruled by the BJP, would be "highly favorable" to his party and would "precipitate a situation in which a Lok Sabha election will become inevitable." He told newsmen here before starting the seventh day of his Janadesh Yatra, that the BJP would contest all the seats in the election and would make a clean sweep of it. "So far, only the anti-Congress factor had been changing the polity, but now, for the first time, the pro-BJP factor was bringing about the change," he said. Welcoming the decision of the Election Commission to introduce electronic voting machines in the forthcoming elections, he said: "If it is not possible to have these machines in all the polling stations, at least the sensitive polling stations should be identified for this facility." He demanded that Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan immediately call a meeting with representatives of all parties to identify sensitive polling stations vulnerable to electoral malpractices. "Other details of the election which is like mini-general elections, should also be discussed at the meeting," he added.

Staggered Schedule

Advani took strong exception to the staggered poll schedule announced by the commission, stating it would give rise to "all kinds of apprehensions, suspicions and allegations". Stating that the poll schedule had no justification, he said it should be a single-day-poll or at the most could be spread over three days if there were any logistic problems. Asked whether the party would give preference to old candidates in the ensuing elections, he said there was no hard and fast rules for selection of candidates. He said the Central Election Committee of the party, comprising the party presidents of the four states and other leaders, would meet at Bhopal on Sep 24 and 25 at the end of the Janadesh Yatra to finalize the list.

Executive Meet

Advani said the national executive of the party would hold a three-day session from Oct 1 at Luchnow, which would focus on the issues that the party would highlight in the elections. Asked what issues the party was likely to highlight, he said there were some "ready-made issues provided by the Congress," like the "suitcase culture" and religion bill. "The Government insisted that a religion be made an issue by trying to enact the twin bills separating religion from politics—even now they (Congress) are not withdrawing. Obviously, they want to keep the issue alive and give a bonus to the BJP", he said. Stating the response to the yatra was tremendous, he said rarely had any political campaign provided such instant results as the Janadesh Yatra had. "We are asking for elections in the four states and they were announced just after we started on our yatra. We were saying that the religion bill would undermine democracy and other Opposition parties like the Janata Dal and the CPI came out against the bill in a forthright manner." he said. "Now, the bill seems to be the

CPM's baby—it is to be seen how they shape up the baby," he added. Earlier, BJP general secretary M. Venkaiah Naidu, who is coordinating the yatra in the South, said they had covered 2,050 kms from Mysore to Visakhapatnam of the total, 3,791 kms to Bhopal. He said 20 districts had been covered including in Andhra Pradesh, some of which were strongholds of the outlawed People's War Group.

* BJP Plans To Use High Technology Campaign Strategy

94AS0002I Bombay TIMES OF INDIA in English 19 Sep 93 p 17

[Article by Sabina Sehgal: "Hi-Tech Hindutva"]

[Text] The BJP has finally discovered Marshal MacLuhan. The medium is increasingly becoming the message for the protagonists of Hindutva. No longer is the party willing to rely solely on the rabble-rousing of Sadhvi Rithambara or Uma Bharti, or even the mesmeric posturings of Lal Krishna Advani or Atal Behari Vajpayee at some remote village square. In short, the BJP has turned high-tech. It has awakened to the virtues of designer messages and saleable images. "Our attempt at modernization only reflects the explosion of knowledge and information which has taken place around the world," explains Pramod Mahajan, party general secretary heading its election cell and the man behind the recent overhaul of the BJP's media strategy. The next election may well see the suave Advani's rehearsed rhetoric, captured on celluloid, becoming the subject of in-depth empirical research. Market forces, quite like those harnessed by the campaign planners of George Bush, would then determine what changes ought to be introduced in the speeches, perhaps allowing for the variations required in different regions. The BJP may also get the election speeches of Advani and other leaders dubbed by professionals into regional languages—Telugu, Bengali, Marathi, Kannada. It is convinced that this "electrifying idea" will work wonders, particularly if care is taken to ensure that the lip-sync is coordinated accurately. A neatly packaged video copy of the final product will then be dispatched to the most remote parts of the country—to state party bosses, candidates, party workers, cable networks. Speeches meshed together with folklore, tales from the *Panchatantra*, humor—entertainment will be the key word and votes the catchword. The media blitzkrieg will ensure an unprecedented reach. Clearly, Dr J.K. Jain's video raths would be a thing of the past, and even, if they are continued, their efficacy would be limited. As the entire country, barring a few thousand villages, is well-connected by television and cable networks, the party has decided to take full advantage of the facilities, says Mahajan. "We might even consider helping the remaining villages set up dishes and acquire television sets—because if our target is reaching the 500 million electorate of this country, then this effort would be perfectly cost-effective," he adds. For, as he points out, even the most well-planned election tour by a leader, such as Advani, would only allow for a maximum of 12 public meetings a day, covering at best a million people. "By utilizing cable and video networks, we can reach the last voter and this is precisely what we plan to do," he avers. The BJP's multi-pronged strategy will also include modernization of the party organization itself. Computers will replace typewriters and the fax will be used in place of the telephone. At the recently-concluded "media workshop" organized by the party, an overwhelming majority felt it was time the BJP replaced its cyclostyled press releases with a centralized computer network that would distribute news through fax machines all over the country. The party has also identified 84 major media centers across the country where it will set up "media cells" and fax machines from where information will further percolate to the smaller centers. As Mahajan points out, the essential objective of any political party is to acquire power—though he qualifies that this is only a means, albeit an important one, to an end. Of course, there are a few sceptics within the party who are convinced that all these efforts really amount to selling the party like a brand of soap—the marketing rules for the latter can never be applied to a living political party, they contend. Mahajan's response to this criticism is pragmatic: "I think it is time we stopped shying away from words such as "sell"—we must recognize that there has been a major revolution in the world of mass communication. If we maintain that a good advertisement campaign cannot sell a bad product; conversely, people will never purchase a good product if they do not know about it." But public relations as a concept is anathema to the BJP. "There is no PR firm that is equipped to handle a political party—we could train them, instead," is the prompt response of many within the party. In fact, despite having employed the services of a reputed market research company to analyze its prospects in the forthcoming assembly elections, the BJP has been working on its own computer data base analyzes by mixing the constituency trend with the census figures. This, along with the closely-monitored findings of the market research agency and the feedback from the state leaders, will no doubt limit, if not eliminate, the margin of error in electoral calculations. Even R.K. Swamy, the ad agency for the BJP the last time around, will be supplemented this time by a panel of ad agencies with specific briefs. Hindutva will never be the same again. Nor will cable television.

* BJP Promises Sales Tax Abolition if Elected

94AS0046E Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 24 Sep 93 p 3

[Article by Praslin Sonwalkar]

[Text] New Delhi—The main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party will abolish sales tax if it is voted to power in the upcoming assembly election in four northern states.

A promise to this effect has been included in the party's manifesto in order to retain and increase its support base among traders and the business community.

Such a promise has been a part of the manifesto since the Jan Sangh (forerunner of the BJP) days, but was not mentioned so explicitly in the manifesto during the last assembly elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The promise would now be common to the manifestoes for all the four states.

A high-level party meeting was held in New Delhi recently in which the necessary change in the manifesto was finalized. It was attended by those who were associated with tax matters when the party was in power.

These included Kalyan Singh, Rajendra Gupta, Babulal Jain, Shanta Kumar and also representatives of 'vyapar mandal', a body of traders and businessmen of Uttar Pradesh considered close to the party.

On the basis of their personal experiences in handling the tax portfolio, the leaders discussed the implications of abolishing sales tax, which is the biggest contributor to the government exchequer.

The move to include the promise once again in the manifesto has also been prompted by the complaints from the party's supporters among the business and trading communities about the cumbersome procedures involved in collecting sales tax and the corrupt practises these led to.

Since it would not be practical to do away with the sales tax without arranging for an alternative source of revenue, BJP sources said the Center would be asked to levy "additional excise duty," aside from the existing one which goes into the Central kitty.

Such a tax could be levied at the manufacturing point and the states paid their share according to a formula decided upon by the Center and the states.

Aside from compensating the loss incurred by states by abolishing sales tax, the new measure would come as a relief to business and trading communities since they would be free from the red tape associated with collecting the tax.

The sources said there could be some delay in a state receiving its share from the Center after the additional excise duty was collected, but the benefits of doing away with the sales tax justified the move.

The current procedure of collecting sales tax is considered favorable to those businessmen who are dishonest and succeed in evading the tax.

"Everything depends on the Center agreeing to the proposal of levying additional excise duty. We will certainly move toward abolishing the sales tax when we come to power, but what is left unsaid is that this would not be possible unless there is a BJP government at the Center. It is another way of seeking votes for the party during the next general elections," a senior party leader said.

Uttar Pradesh Example

Of the four states in which the party was in power, it was in Uttar Pradesh that several steps were taken by the Kalyan Singh government to simplify the sales tax structure and provide concession to new units.

Several industries in the small-scale sector were exempted from sales tax, while some suggestions put forth by the 'vyapar mandal' were implemented, providing some relief to traders and businessmen.

The change in the manifesto finalized in the party meeting would be placed for approval before the national executive at its meeting in Lucknow next month.

The state manifesto committees, party sources said, were in process of finalizing the respective documents, and these would be approved during the Lucknow meeting.

The issue of sales tax abolition would be common to the manifesto of the four party units.

* BJP Sweep of Elections Forecast

94AS0045H New Delhi ORGANISER in English 3 Oct 93 p 7

[Text] New Delhi—Illegal dismissal of the duly elected governments, on Ayodhya, and the relative performances of the BJP Governments with its predecessors, are emerging as the core issues in the Assembly elections to be held in November.

The public anger against the stupid and politically unwise actions taken by the Rao Government in the wake of December 6 happenings prompted the Government to extend the President's rule in U.P., M.P., Rajasthan and Himachal by another six months. The ruling party is reluctant to face the people even now but is in no position to conjure up the requisite 2/3rd majority in parliament to amend the Constitution for any further extension of the central rule in these states.

The unprecedented popular response to the 'Janedesh Yatras', which were greeted by more than 2 crore people in a short span of a fortnight has sent shock waves in the ruling party circles and made the Congress more jittery.

The Election Commission's announcement of the interim election schedule, obviously without consulting the centre, caught the ruling party napping and further intensified the internecine warfare in the Congress from the Central to the constituency level. The ruling party finds itself ill-prepared for the electoral battle and is in desperation looking for political allies with whatever clout or credibility.

The BJP, on the other hand, exudes confidence and is way ahead of other parties in so far as the election machine and the electoral strategy was concerned. It is a measure of the party's self-confidence that it has decided to go it alone and contest all the 1,083 assembly seats in the four BJP states and Delhi.

The party chief, L.K. Advani, had lost no time after taking over the command of the party at the Bangalore session to gear the party for the assembly elections which he had been predicting would be held in November.

The BJP has set up a data bank in its central office in which it has collected information regarding the performance of all the parties in all assembly and Lok Sabha elections since 1952 and related it to the latest census figures to identify constituencies on the basis of their political behaviour over the years.

Thus, the party knows which of the constituencies have been its strongholds and returning Jana Sangh and BJP

nominees; the marginal constituencies where the difference between the victory and defeat had been thin; the seats which have been sensitive to waves and had gone with the waves and the constituencies which have been "Congress captive" all through.

The BJP has employed a reputed market research agency to carry out a survey in the clusters thus identified for an "in-house" assessment which the party will make use of while fine-tuning its electoral strategy in the final stages of the campaign.

Pollsters are convinced that the BJP will be returned to power in U.P. with a larger majority in the assembly as compared to the dissolved House. The Samajwadi Party-BSP alliance, the JD and its splinter groups and the Congress would be contesting for the second position.

The Congress Party's position in U.P. is pitiable. At present it ranks fourth in order of strength in the state. Muslims, Scheduled Castes and Brahmins, who used to be the party's mainstay, have all deserted to various parties. Hence its desperate attempt to tie up with Mulayam Singh-Kanshi Ram combine which the latter have so far spurned. The N.D. Tiwari faction in the Congress is opposed to an alliance with Mulayam Singh as its perception is that the party's support to "Maulana" Mulayam Singh had alienated the Hindus from the Congress.

The BJP has a well-oiled election machine in Madhya Pradesh. Add to it the excellent performance of the Patwa Government in the field of Tribal welfare, waiving of loans to farmers, and removal of encroachments in all major towns and cities of the state.

The Congress in M.P. is a house divided against itself. The Congress President is operating through Shukla brothers to ensure the elimination of Arjun Singh faction in the coming elections. Singh, on his part, is trying for a tie-up with Kanshi Ram, to marginalise Shukla brothers and to retain a foothold in his home state.

The Janata Dal and its allies are a marginal force in the State. Their presence in the electoral fray is bound to hurt the Congress Party as it will only eat into the non-BJP votes.

In Rajasthan, the pollsters are unanimous that the BJP would be returned to power with a thumping majority. A section of the JD (Digvijay) had merged with the BJP and the remaining group has almost disintegrated. The JD(B) is not a force to reckon with. The Congress has no leader of the status of Bhairon Singh Shekhawat in Rajasthan, and is sharply divided and demoralised.

The regional issue of "royalty" for the hydel power generated in Himachal and the clean government provided by the Shanta Kumar Government are bound to sway voters in the elections in the hill state. The dismissal of the Government against the wishes of the then Governor will also be a major issue in the coming poll. In the last election, the BJP had conceded 17 seats to the JD but in the coming elections the party will be contesting these as well. Prof. Prem Kumar Dhumal, President of the Himachal BJP, is confident of capturing a dozen of these 17 seats and thus improving upon its strength in the dissolved Assembly. In the last election, the BJP had contested 51 seats and captured 46. Two JD MLAs later joined the BJP raising its strength to 48.

The impressive victory of the ABVP and the TDF in the Delhi University elections show which way the wind is blowing. The presence of the JD, which has some base among certain sections of Muslims and backwards in Delhi, will also operate in BJP's favour. The severe infighting in the Congress will be a bonus.

The BJP will also contest the Assembly elections in Mizoram. The Chakma Jateeya Parishad, which polled 39 per cent votes in the autonomous district council elections, has since merged with the BJP. Sushma Swaraj, official spokesperson of the party, says the BJP is negotiating for seat adjustments with the Riyang Democratic Party and confidently asserts that the BJP will open its account in this North-Eastern state Assembly.

* Advani Interviewed on BJP Policy, Prospects

94AS0045I Bombay THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA in English 3 Oct 93 pp 6-7

[Interview with Lal Krishna Advani by THE STATESMAN'S Swati Chaturvedi]

[Text] Meet the man who could be Prime Minister—Lal Krishna Advani, the articulate President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He would accept the offer to be the Prime Minister but insists that he doesn't aspire for it. The "Yatra" star of the BJP is on the road to success. He impresses you with the force of his convictions and irritates you with his didactism.

In a wide ranging interview to Swati Chaturvedi of THE STATESMAN, Advani spoke on a variety of issues ranging from the Sahmat controversy to economic liberalization, about his political ambitions, the fact that he never wore bell bottoms since the age of 12 and about his trade mark moustache.

He already has the abruptness that comes with power. He allows no one to interrupt while he holds forth in his slick office at the BJP headquarters at Ashok Road at New Delhi. The paraphernalia of power by the Capital's yardstick—National Security Guard Black Cat commandos—accompany him wherever he goes.

THE STATESMAN: Have you ever at any point of time regretted joining politics?

L.K. Advani: I have been fortunate that way. I have no regrets that I can think of. I am not the sort of person who believes in ifs and buts. I tell myself, if something adverse has happened it has happened. Apart from that, I have received a lot of affection from many I have come in contact with. Earlier there was also mass adulation but of late there has also been vehement criticism.

THE STATESMAN: How do you react to criticism as a person, not as the BJP president.

L.K. Advani: If somebody casts aspersions on my motives I feel bad. If somebody disagrees with me it does not bother me.

THE STATESMAN: What would you have done if you had been in Narasimha Rao's position on December 6, 1992?

L.K. Advani: Why should I have placed myself in that position? He deliberately did not do anything. Not only did he not do anything, he wanted the structure to be demolished. It was his calculation that this would pay his Government.

THE STATESMAN: When do you see yourself in Narasimha Rao's place?

L.K. Advani: Frankly, I aspire that the BJP comes to power.

THE STATESMAN: You mean you do not have any ambition to be Prime Minister?

L.K. Advani: I have not thought about it.

THE STATESMAN: But you are your party's candidate?

L.K. Advani: I don't want to deny that because the party would ... (laughs). I long to see the BJP come to power.

THE STATESMAN: Will you be like V.P. Singh and say you do not want to be PM?

L.K. Advani: No, I will not say that. But I would not like to comment on this.

THE STATESMAN: If your party comes to power, how would you tackle the Bajrang Dal and the VHP? Both the organizations are expanding and a lot of anti-social elements have joined them.

L.K. Advani: Who, for example. I tell you, you build up an image. Don't you think it is remarkable that the Bajrang Dal was the first to be absolved of the ban because the courts found nothing against them. They do not have many members. I know the VHP. It is a big body, comprising all kinds of people, here and abroad. A large number of sadhus who are with the VHP are saintly persons and yet the image projected is one of obscurantism, of ganja, charas. Average sadhu jo hota hai woh image VHP ki banane ki koshish ki hai. No one would dare say or do the same things about the priests or saints of other religions. You can condemn the Hindu society in any manner you want. You cannot have double standards. This is precisely my quarrel with pseudo-secularism, which is practised by my adversaries. In the name of secularism if you make this country irreligious you will deprive it of its essential personality and dynamism, because the essential personality is Hindu. In the name of secularism you cannot have double standards—one for the Hindu and the other for the Muslim. Pseudo-secularism is nothing but sordid politics of vote banks. In India, the Muslims can be made to respond to religion and the Hindu to caste. So let us appeal to Hindus in the name of caste and Muslims in the name of religion and we can then have votebanks. But for the first time the BJP tried to sublimate casteist feelings. We have not succeeded in tackling the Muslim community as yet. We will as time passes.

THE STATESMAN: What do you think about defections? Suppose tomorrow the Congress(I) splits and some leaders want to join the BJP, would you let them?

L.K. Advani: There are some people in the Congress(I) who share our views. But it all depands when they want to join the BJP and for what reasons.

THE STATESMAN: Who are these leaders?

L.K. Advani: They are known all over.

THE STATESMAN: Would you let Bhajan Lal join the BJP?

L.K. Advani: No, not Bhajan Lal.

THE STATESMAN: What do you think of the Congress party's future?

L.K. Advani: I think I am a Congressman, as the BJP has inherited the real tradition of the Congress—the tradition of Sardar Patel and Gandhiji. However, today the Congress is like lemmings swimming towards their destruction.

THE STATESMAN: What is your opinion of the Sahmat show and the welter of controversy surrounding it?

L.K. Advani: It was wrong on the part of the Sahmat to put up a panel showing Ram and Sita as brother and sister. It was totally wrong to put up a panel of that kind in Ayodhya. Can you do a similar thing with other religions?

THE STATESMAN: But it was just a panel of an alternate version of the Ramayana that does exist. Why should it bother the BJP?

L.K. Advani: In India the tradition is that nothing bothers. Not even a single sect of the Hindu society has been spared. Whether it is the Sanatan Dharma, the Sikh religion or the Arya Samaj, all have been the target of vitriolic attacks. Nobody has objected to that. These days there are two different laws, one for the Hindus and one for the others. Can someone say that Salman Rushdie's book should not have been banned?

THE STATESMAN: Are you against the ban?

L.K. Advani: In my opinion no book, unless it is obscene, should be banned. I wrote an article in THE STATESMAN, where I compared it to the Riddles of Ram. If you have two laws, one for the Riddles of Ram and one for Salman Rushdie's book, it will definitely create problems.

THE STATESMAN: What do you think of the government's policy of economic liberalization?

L.K. Advani: We welcome it in as much as it means abandoning the Nehru-Mahalonobis model of socialism. But it also shows that this Government does not have any faith in the potential of the people. In order to secure the support of the IMF and the World Bank, this Government is bartering the freedom of the country by following their

diktats. Therefore, we are opposed to this Government's present policies which arise from an inferiority complex.

THE STATESMAN: You think the Sangh Parivar's policy of Swadeshi is a solution...?

L.K. Advani: When I talk about Swadeshi I do not talk in terms of what it meant in 1947 when it basically meant use of swadeshi goods. I see it as an attitude of mind. It means that one has confidence in the people of the country. Therefore, liberalization in as much as it means de-bureaucratization, de-control, is something that the BJP is all for. But we have reservations about globalization. Like multinationals being permitted to come into the low-technology areas in consumer goods which is neither right nor necessary.

THE STATESMAN: Is there any difference between the BJP and the RSS over swadeshi?

L.K. Advani: No, there is no divide. We are not going to allow multinationals into low-technology areas. But obviously we will not ask those who are already here to leave.

THE STATESMAN: What do you think of Harshad Mehta's allegations about the Rs 1 crore payment to the PM?

L.K. Advani: It's not just one crore, it is a big list of charges that has been levelled against him over the past six to eight months.

THE STATESMAN: There are allegations that what Mehta is saying is at the instigation of the BJP.

L.K. Advani: Jai Prakash was supposed to be with the BJP. Morarji Bhai was also supposed to be with the BJP. It is a standard charge. Those days we were not important. Now we definitely are. These days we are held responsible for anything that happens. I have not seen Harshad Mehta as yet, but I am sure members of the Government have met him, talked to him, chatted with him, yet I am supposed to be the person who puts up Harshad Mehta.

THE STATESMAN: Do you want to see him?

L.K. Advani: No, I do not want to see him. But I do know Ram. [Box, p 7]

Advani Unplugged

On the books that he's read.

When I was young, I read all of Alexander Dumas's books—I was very fond of them. Then, I read Agatha Christie murder mysteries and liked them. I read a lot of fiction even now: at present I am on Stanley Wolpert's biography of Jinnah, Jinnah of Pakistan.

On when he finds the time to read.

While travelling, as I am on the road most of the time. Otherwise, of course, I hardly have the time.

On the kind of music he likes.

Classical music. I used to listen to music when I wasn't so busy as I am now. But you've got to understand it to relish it.

On driving.

I started driving at the age of 19.

I have driven scooters, cars and even buses!

On his trademark moustache.

Cartoonists always pick on something distinctive. In my case, it is either my moustache—which I have sported since my college days—or my bald pate. All the other things are such that I look the archetypal common man.

On his preference for dress other than khadi.

Even before entering politics, I was comfortable in this dress. Joining the RSS at an early age as I did changes one's attiude. But I switch to bandgala suits in winter. And I have not worn bellbottoms since 12, just like the neck-tie.

On the greatest influence on his life.

Deen Dayal Upadhya. He was the General Secretary of the former Jan Sangh. He was, in fact, the chief ideologue of the sangh.

On his family's reaction to his being a politician.

They have adjusted to it. They are not involved in politics themselves but take great interest in it. We discuss politics quite often. And my wife, of course, takes great care of me.

On his marriage and his wife.

I got married in 1965, that is 28 years ago. It was an arranged marriage; my sister arranged it, but I did get to meet her before the wedding.

On whether his life would have been a normal householder's had he not entered politics.

Everyone adjusts.

* Vajpayee Profiled, Role Seen Important

94AS0045J Bombay THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA in English 3 Oct 93 p 7

[Article by Swati Chaturvedi]

[Text] These days Atal Behari Valpayee increasingly reminds one of Edward Kennedy. The same potential yet the tragic flaw of destiny. Singular achievements in what most people consider futile tilling at windmills—the legislative sphere. In the evening of his life Vajpayee is seen as a lion in winter, lonely yet loyal over the Ayodhya issue.

Shunned by the hardliners in the BJP, Vajpayee strangely finds himself a misfit in the very party he helped create. It is a tragedy of sorts for a man who headed the Jan Sangh from 1968 to 1973, led his party in to the Janata coalition in 1977 and who was the first President of the newly formed Janata Party after the alliance split.

There is little doubt, however, that Vajpayee enjoys and even exploits the coveted position of "elder statesman," a mantle that is his alone in the BJP. There are few within the party who would dare speak out against him. Which is why he can carry off with flair viewpoints which contradict the party line. Added to this is his incredible ability to hold teeming crowds spellbound with his wit and eloquence.

The role of the "grand patriarch" was played by him to perfection at the BJP Gandhinagar session. The strained relation between L.K. Advani and Murli Monahar Joshi was apparent, but Vajpayee, while praising Joshi's Ekta Yatra said that the party was electing its future Prime Minister in Advani, thereby proving himself to be the perennial peacemaker.

He has come a long way from the days when he grew up in the back alleys of Gwalior, where his father taught Hindi in a local school. A product of several political influences, Vajpayee was a member of the All India Students' Federation before he joined the RSS in 1940.

He was equally enchanted by Gandhian socialism and was deeply influenced by Jai Prakash Narain. But it is perhaps Shayama Prasad Mukherjee, the founder of the Jan Sangh, and Golwalkar who left an indelible impression on the young Vajpayee. Like many of his generation he, too, courted arrest during the Quit India Movement in 1942. He later worked for the RSS magazines Panchajanaya and Veer Arjun, of which he was the editor.

As Member of Parliament (he was first elected to the Lok Sabha in 1957) he has envinced a keen interest in foreign affairs. His finest hour was his stint as External Affairs Minister. He was the first to make a speech in Hindi at the United Nations.

Today he is on the right side of the Party President because of his distaste for the hardline policies adopted by Joshi. But it appears that Vajpayee will always be the right man on the wrong side.

* CBI Charges Against BJP Leaders Seen Benefitting Party

94AS0047I Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 7 Oct 93 p 8

[Editorial: "Back to Ram"]

[Text] After 10 months the Central Bureau of Investigation has succeeded in filing chargesheets against those involved in the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. By naming important leaders of the Shiv Sena and the sangh parivar the CBI has surprised nobody. The inordinately long time it took over its investigations should make its findings foolproof. The track record of the apex investigating body, however, in no way guarantees its evidence will pass muster in a court of law. The final outcome of the chargesheets is by no means a foregone conclusion. Yet the timing of the disclosures by the CBI makes them politically important. The public accusation of the leaders of the Hindutva movement will inevitably become an issue in the forthcoming assembly elections in North India. Both secular and communal forces will make political capital of the announcement. The dividends, however, may not be according to Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao's calculations.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has no particular reason to be unhappy with its indictment by the CBI. The sangh parivar has never sought to dissociate itself from the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya. Indeed, it has seen the event as the logical culmination of the Ramjanmabhoomi movement which it spearheaded. Other issues had somewhat sidelined the campaign to build a temple to Ram on the site of the Babri Masjid. The chargesheet brings the subject back into the limelight. The issue will once again become a matter of public discussion and debate. Using the findings of the CBI, the BJP will have the opportunity to state its case and propagate its views. The sangh parivar will not be unjustified in seeing the CBI's disclosures as a gift from Ram to further its election prospects. It is an irony that the prevailing circumstances might make a criminal charge work to legitimise the claims of the BJP. The chargesheet has made certain the coming elections become a referendum on the events of December 6, 1992. The CBI, willy nilly, has played into the hands of Mr L.K. Advani, the BJP's president.

The Congress expects the CBI's accusations to swing the Muslim vote in its favour. The Muslim populace of North India watched with dismay the prevarication of Mr Rao's government on December 6 and the communal riots which followed. The image of the Congress as the protector of minorities has been tarnished beyond repair. The names of the Hindutva leaders on a fragile chargesheet are not enough to restore the lost confidence. An unproven accusation is too little too late for winning back the Muslim electorate. The focus of the election campaign will be the CBI's chargesheet and therefore the Ramjanmabhoomi movement. The elections will be fought on an agenda framed by the sangh parivar. Whatever the outcome of the polls, the sangh parivar will have the satisfaction of being the dominant voice in the political discourse of the country.

* CBI Charges Improve BJP Position

94AS0042B Calcutta ANANDA BAZAR PATRIKA in Bengali 9 Oct 93 p 4

[Article by Sunit Ghosh: "To Please Rao, the CBI Has Put a Weapon in the BJP Hand"]

[Text] The Central Bureau of Investigation [CBI] has done a great favor to the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP]. Investigating for about one year it brought criminal charges—on the eve of the elections for the legislative assemblies in the five North Indian states—against 40 persons of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Shiv Sena, including BJP President Lal Krishna Advani, for the alleged demolition of a controversial structure in Ayodhya. Besides Advani, this list of accused included Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray; Ashok Singhal of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad; President of the Ram Janmabhumi Trust Paramahansa Ram Chandra Das; Former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Kalyan Singh; Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi [former BJP president]; Parliamentarians Uma Bharati and Saddhi Ratambhara; President of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Vishnu Dalmia; and so forth. In short, practically all the top leaders of the Shiv Sena, the BJP, the Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad were considered criminals in the estimate of the CBI. According to the CBI report these persons had made pre-planned conspiracy directly or indirectly for destroying a religious place.

As per the CBI statement, after detailed investigation they are definite about the pre-planned conspiracy behind the 6 December incident [when Babri Mosque was demolished]. The CBI report would go in favor of the central government, an indication to this effect was recently given by Narasimha Rao at a number of public meetings. The CBI has fulfilled that desire of the prime minister. But for an unknown reason no charges were brought against any Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS] leader although quite a number of RSS leaders were present in Ayodhya on 6 December. The RSS was banned for its alleged involvement with the 6 December incident, but none of the leaders of that organization was caught in the CBI net. However, charges were brought against the leaders of that party against whom the central government did not have at that time any material or evidence for declaring it as a banned party.

It goes without saying that the BJP leaders were happy over the CBI report because to please the prime minister the CBI has put such a weapon into the quiver of the BJP which it could utilize as one of the forces of Congress government's anti-Left activities and thereby make efforts to win the hearts of Hindu voters in Northern India in the next elections, and there is no reason that it will fail in that endeavor. Maybe mockingly Advani's thanks to the central government for the report is quite significant. In Advani's opinion by levelling the charges the Congress government has made the people realize that in the election they wish to bring the Ayodhya issue to the forefront. It will be a gain and not a loss for the BJP.

In fact, it seems from a thorough analysis that the anti-BJP forces are in a way resolved to bring a BJP victory in the next election. The more the anti-BJP forces have tried to corner the BJP since 6 December's "violent incident" in Ayodhya, it has become proportionately that much stronger and its successful propaganda campaign in the Hindi Belt pointed out that the opposition to the BJP is an opposition to Lord Rama. In short, it is rather impossible for any party, which is branded as anti-Rama, to expand its influence in the minds of the Hindu population in Northern India. As the BJP was aware of the sentiments of the common people in the Hindi belt region, it was possible for it to put the opposition into a tight corner even after fighting them with their backs on the wall.

Let us give some examples. When the BJP leaders were feeling quite embarrassed after the demolition of the controversial structure and an internal conflict started in the BJP, the central government arrested Advani at the advice of its friend—the Leftists. Immediately the absolutely cornered BJP returned to its aggressive role with great vigor. I have heard the anti-BJP parliamentarians, who voiced their demand for the arrest to Advani, saying after his arrest: "Maybe it was not good because Advani has become a hero!" Each and every successive decision the Rao government took at that time in order to please the Leftists later went in favor of the BJP. For instance, the central government's declaration that the mosque will be rebuilt on the same disputed land and some establishments of the Sangh family, including the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, would be banned. At their advise the ministries and legislative assemblies in the four BJP-ruled states were dismissed and the president's rule was imposed. They believed at that time that in this process they would be able to crush the BJP.

But the experience that followed had frightened them. It was realized within a few days that it was not possible to weaken the BJP by unleashing on them a steam roller of repressive policy. On the contrary, the BJP has become stronger with the rise in government's repressive policy because in the eyes of the Hindus in Northern India all activities of the central government were anti-Rama, and for that reason, anti-Hindu. A strong air hit the BJP's sail once again after the verdict of the Madhya Pradesh high court saying that beside Uttar Pradesh the dismissal of the other three BJP-ruled states was unconstitutional. The panicky Congress leadership had ordered its workers to spread out in different parts for erasing the anti-Rama Temple feelings of the Congress Party from the minds on the Hindus in Uttar Pradesh. Thereafter, the banning of the BJP sponsored public meeting at the Talkotora Stadium [in Delhi], and in its protest Atal Behari Vajpayee's [noted BJP leader] hunger strike, the utter humiliation of the central government to bring back Vajpayee to the parliament after breaking his fast—all these have strengthened the BJP.

In this background there is no cause for the anti-BJP forces to be happy over the CBI charges. Firstly, unless one is indicted in the court of law no one can be denied from his right to take part in the election on the basis of charges brought against him. Secondly, most of the persons against whom the charges were made are the parliamentarians, so the question of their contesting in the legislative assembly elections does not arise. Moreover, it will be a happy match if any BJP leader or a candidate seeking election is arrested on the basis of the CBI charges. The BJP has decided that if any leader or candidate is arrested on the eve of the election, then without releasing him on bail it will continue the election campaign with his chained wooden statue and make the voters realize that he has become a "martyr" for "Rama." What could be a more effective weapon than this one in an election campaign in the North Indian Hindi belt? The people generally have sympathies for the oppressed. Taking advantage of this weakness of the people, George Fernandes [a former Janata Dal minister] despite remaining in jail during the emergency, won an election with a huge majority. At that time the Janata Dal workers putting a statue of Fernandes in a cage at the Mazaffarpur parliamentary election center in Bihar had successfully conducted the election campaign. In fact, Fernandes won that election without even spending a penny. This time the BJP has taken a decision to adopt the same trick.

The Janata Dal and the CPM [Communist Party of India-Marxist] are also frightened over the CBI charges. The leaders of these two parties feel that the central government has proved its imprudence by issuing the charges on the eve of the election because this will benefit the BJP.

They believe that the Rao government has done it knowingly for the benefit of the BJP. Being in difficulty the CPM sneakily forgets now that Narasimha Rao took wrong decisions one after the other at their advise and enhanced the popularity of the BJP. Presuming that the CBI charges would go in favor of the BJP, Malayem Singh Yadav is also now eager to make the caste-Hindus happy. He has asked his party workers not to say anything against the caste-Hindus when criticizing the BJP. Three years ago while launching an attack against the caste-Hindus prior to a legislative assembly election, this spokesman of the Mandal Commission, a secular, socialist leader earned fame in Hindu society as "Maulana [eminent Muslim scholar] Mulayam." Under pressure, he now seeks to free himself from the "Maulana" title. He might have learned from experience that it is rather impossible to get back the [administrative] throne of Uttar Pradesh with anti-Rama and anti-Hindu feelings.

* BJP Said Facing 'Now or Never' Elections

94AS0061B Madras THE HINDU in English 17 Oct 93 p 7

[Article by Neena Vyas: "It's Now or Never"]

[Text] For the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] the coming State Assembly elections are a preparation for the mother of all battles that will necessarily take place in 1996, or earlier, whenever the next Lok Sabha polls are held. And not only senior party leaders, but also the top leadership of the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (organization of service to the nation)] concede that an electoral loss this time around could put the party back by 10 years.

To some extent the party has a handicap. After all, it was the ruling party in four of the six States where elections are now being held, and in Delhi too it has had a majority in the past. To justify its oft-repeated claim that it is a "Government-in-waiting" at the Centre, that its one-point Ayodhya demolition campaign is approved by the "people's court" the party would have to not only come out victorious in the four Northern States and Delhi, but must show an improvement on its past performance. After all, just winning the four States would simply mean it has got back what it lost as a result of its own action in Ayodhya.

Party leaders themselves concede that the elections will by no means be a walk-over, not even in Uttar Pradesh, in spite of December 6. Reports suggest that the party is not riding as high a tide as it did in 1991. Poll surveys sponsored earlier by a news magazine, and more recently by the BJP itself, warn that Ayodhya may no longer be a powerful issue that could garner votes for the BJP.

And besides, the political scenario has once again changed with the Janata Dal trying desperately to pick up the broken fragments of its shattered image, not to mention the Mulayam Singh Yadav/Kanshi Ram factor. Even the Congress(I) is showing signs of recovering some of the lost ground—witness the successful rally organised in Lucknow last week.

Beneath the bravado—we will win all four States and Delhi, the BJP leaders claim—there is a descernible nervousness. Nothing is being left to chance, all details of the poll campaign are being worked out meticulously.

Perhaps most importantly, the Sangh combine has taken a decision that the mother organisation, the RSS, will step in directly into the political ring in Uttar Pradesh. Thousands of RSS 'pracharaks' (propagandists) and volunteers of the khaki short variety will themselves canvass from door-to-door in favour of the BJP. The ground work has already been done and the various districts have been allocated to different RSS units.

This decision was taken about ten days ago when the RSS convened a two-day meeting of its 'pracharaks' in the State to take stock of the situation. The meeting at Ghaziabad, which at different sessions was chaired by Mr. H.V. Seshadri, RSS general-secretary, and by Mr. Rajendra Singh, joint general-secretary, was also attended by former U.P. Chief Minister, Mr. Kalyan Singh, and by the president of the BJP State unit, Mr. Kalraj Mishra. Senior vice-president of the BJP and the man in-charge of Uttar Pradesh, Mr. Sunder Singh Bhandari, participated in the deliberations.

Mr. Rajendra Singh has indicated that as many as 20 of the 220-odd BJP members of the dissolved Assembly will not be given ticket. He has confirmed that the RSS volunteers will participate directly in the election campaign (notwithstanding its pretence at being an apolitical, cultural organisation).

Certain differences in the perceptions of Mr. Kalyan Singh and Mr. Kalraj Mishra have reportedly been somewhat ironed out with the RSS not wanting to 'mandalise' the elections too much. "There is no denying that caste has been playing an important role in elections, but beyond a point, we would not like to use caste and caste politics... for that cuts at the very goal of the RSS, a united Hindu society," said Mr. Rajendra Singh. That was said in the context of the report that Mr. Kalyan Singh had been pushing for a very large share of the nominations to the backward caste.

The RSS certainly hopes that the winning of these elections would be the penultimate step before climbing onto the saddle of power at the Centre. It is also being said in BJP circles that the candidates are being selected in a manner that would ensure that the levers of power remain with the RSS, and no prospective Chief Minister gets too big for his boots, as it were. If Mr. Madan Lal Khurana has been given the green signal from Delhi, the nominations have ensured that not all his men have the party ticket. In Uttar Pradesh too, the crucial State, Mr. Kalyan Singh may find that he cannot have his way in the selection of candidates.

Mr. Rajendrda Singh has hinted that even as the RSS is whole-heartedly supporting the BJP "because it has done the most for furthering the RSS ideology," the organisation has not and will not lose sight of its main goal, the spread of Hindutva. "It will be difficult, but the difference

between the party and the Government must be maintained. I tell those who want a ticket that they must remember that the senior RSS leaders are not in the race."

A poll survey of the five States—U.P., Madhya Pradesh, Himachal, Rajasthan and Delhi—has already been completed. The party also intends to sponsor yet another mid-campaign survey about 10 days from now. The same advertising agency, ADMAR, will in all probability be asked to conduct the survey, according to Mr. Pramod Mahajan, convenor of the election committee. The idea would be to get a feedback half-way through the campaign and fill in the gaps, if any, locate the weak points, and make the necessary corrections. An exit poll may also be taken after Delhi goes to the polls on November 6. This may also help the BJP to gauge what might be in store for it in Uttar Pradesh and the other States.

Mr. Mahajan has also pointed out that since the four States will be going to the polls at different times, the party has planned a different campaign, in each State, highlighting the local issues peculiar to the State. "Once Delhi's campaign begins, leading to the polls on November 6, our strategy would be exposed. We cannot use the same strategy in Uttar Pradesh, for instance, which will go to the polls on November 18 and 21. Then again for Madhya Pradesh we will unfold yet another campaign plan."

The party is planning to enlist the cooperation of cable television operators in the State going to the polls. Video films on Ayodhya, public rallies held by the BJP leaders, the so-called "Janadesh Yatra" of Mr L.K. Advani, will be given to the operators. The party hopes to "persuade" them (for a price?) to show these videos. The party campaign will thus be brought into the homes of the electorate.

The biggest advantage the BJP has over the other parties is the fact that it has been preparing for these elections ever since its Governments were dismissed and President's rule was imposed. Several national executive meetings, their own organisational elections, the installation of Mr. L.K. Advani as president, new committees and sub-committees of the party, work allocation to different leaders and even the formation of a central election committee—all this was done way ahead of the other major political parties.

Besides, one should not underestimate the quiet groundwork that the RSS and its other front organisations have been doing over the years. The RSS has spread its network wide into every area of public activity—schools, charitable hospitals and clinics, women's organisations, activists working for consumers interests. More recently it has launched its 'swadeshi' campaign and although this has not caught the imagination of the people, some industrialists have shown interest in it.

The BJP has done much of the groundwork. Yatra after yatra, rallies after rallies, the senior leaders of the BJP have been relentlessly campaigning, and not only in the areas now going to the polls, but throughout the length and breadth of the country. The possibility of alliances and electoral understandings with the smaller regional parties has been explored, calculations have been made about the 'Jat' vote, the 'Bania' vote, the 'Mandal' vote, the 'Brahim' and 'Thakur' vote and the 'Sikh' vote.

But even after all this groundwork, a lot will depend on the creation of a 'wave' and a 'mood' in its favour. For this the actual campaign is all important. Leaders of political parties know that it is not the committed party vote, but the floating vote that determines the outcome of every election. And it is here that the money power becomes all important—the posters, the flags, the jeeps blaring the message on the roads, the total presence of the party. And despite all its claims to the contrary, the BJP today can match the Congress(I) when it comes to spending money on elections. That was evident in 1991, and in 1993 it is well positioned to endure that among the major political parties it comes out on top as the biggest spender. If any of the State Assembly elections are lost, it will not be because of inadequate funds.

* Impact of Ayodhya Vote for BJP Analyzed

94AS0062F Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 17 Oct 93 p 11

[Article by Rakesh Joshi and Rajeev Deshpande: "Ayodhya: Ace in BJP's Pack?"]

[Text] The BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] has once again thrown the Ayodhya gauntlet, daring its opponents to a battle over the saffron tribe's favorite agenda. After a brief flirtation with issues like corruption and non-governance, the BJP has settled down to tackling the polls with its time-tested Ramjanmabhoomi plank.

In fashioning out its strategy to recapture power in north India, particularly Uttar Pradesh, the BJP has disregarded a few murmurs within the party that the Ayodhya appeal may not pull in as many votes as it did earlier. Even a party-sponsored survey showing that Ayodhya ranks after price rise, corruption and unemployment in the priority of voters has not deterred the BJP from reemphasising the issue.

After a few days of intense confabulations, the BJP president, Mr L.K. Advani, finally prevailed upon some of his dissenting lieutenants. The Ayodhya card was the one single issue which cut across all regions and castes and would attract the Hindu vote in favour of the BJP. Issues linked to daily life would always have an immediate appeal, but it was the Ramjanmabhoomi movement which actually made an individual cast his vote for the "party of Ram," the BJP bosses felt.

According to the BJP general secretary, Mr Khushabhau Thakre, the intensity of the Ayodhya factor declines as the geographical distance from Faizabad increases. "The heat of the Ram lehar is strong in Avadh and most of Uttar Pradesh. It goes down a bit as you travel away from the site," he said.

Yet, even though Mr Thakre admits that the Ayodhya wave ebbs away from Faizabad, he also asserts the efficacy of the issue as a vote-catcher. "The Ayodhya card is an overall umbrella which gives the BJP its identity. But you must remember that issues like price rise and Article 370

never got us anywhere. It is only when the voters see people opposing a Ram temple at Ramjanmabhoomi that they wake up and react," he said.

Predictably, the BJP's renewed offensive has put the other parties on guard. This time around, the strategy of all non-BJP parties in the crucial battleground of Uttar Pradesh reflects a once-bitten, twice shy approach. Senior leaders of the Janata Dal admit that a combination of factors, including vociferous opposition to the Ram temple, has seen the rise of the BJP.

"During the 1991 Assembly polls, the Sangh Parivar whipped up passions at a subterranean level which we were unable to detect," observed a CPI [Communist Party of India] national council member who played a crucial role in bringing together the erstwhile components of the Janata Parivar on one platform.

While conceding that the BJP's Ayodhya card may still not have lost its appeal, non-BJP leaders differ in their assessment of the challenge posed by it. The Union food minister, Mr Kalpnath Rao, who recently organised a highly successful Congress(I) rally at Lucknow, takes the extreme view when he says that the Ayodhya issue has become a khotta sikka (bad penny) for the BJP. "BJP akhhir kab tak khotta sikka ko chala sakti hai? (How long can the BJP make use of a bad penny?)," he asks.

At the other end of the spectrum is Mr B.P. Maurya, former AICC [All India Congress Committee] general secretary. "In dealing with a party like the BJP, one needs to be doubly cautious. It is easy to say that communal passions have ebbed in Uttar Pradesh and Ayodhya has lost its appeal. The BJP has tasted power in Uttar Pradesh and is capable of doing anything to recapture it."

The Congress strategy for Uttar Pradesh is aimed at putting the Ayodhya issue on the backburner and coming out with an attractive economic agenda for the voters, particularly the rural voters. The party has promised to construct both temple and mosque at Ayodhya through separate trusts, manned by religious personage, and says that the Supreme Court's opinion will have a bearing on this matter.

Senior Congress leaders appear confident that the party's strategy of pitting vikas versus vinash will pay dividends in the long run. Says the former Union minister, Mrs Mohsina Kidwai, "It is my belief that neither a Hindu card nor a Muslim card will help the Congress. The time-tested policies of the Congress have an appeal of their own."

As a leader who is not perceived as being seen as "anti-Ram," Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao has been harping on the theme that Congress is not against "Ram but against the BJP." And, as a corollary to this theme, he has been adding that his party is not against religion but against the misuse of religion.

The Janata Dal too has been toeing a somewhat similar line even though it has been drawing considerable mileage from the Rao government's failure to protect the Babri Masjid. Mr Ajit Singh, convenor of the unified Dal's apex committee, says, "We have consciously chosen to give priority to socio-economic issues over emotive issues."

The Dal's pet themes are social justice, the fallout of economic reforms, the Dunkel controversy and corruption in high places. Mr Ajit Singh says that most parties have a dearth of "saleable issues" to peg their campaign on in the forthcoming battle of hustings.

Interestingly, even Dal leaders are chary of making references to the Babri Masjid in their speeches. "Since the Ram lehar is ebbing, it will be unwise on our part to revive it by demanding the reconstruction of the mosque at the same spot. We will not fall into this trap again," a Dal leader adds.

Even the Samajwadi Party leader, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, the bete noire of the BJP, has been extremely circumspect in dealing with the Ayodhya issue. He says that the Supreme Court should be the final arbiter of the dispute. "I do not want either side to get the impression that it has won and the other side has lost."

To shake off the epithet of "Maulana Mulayam," which he earned after his government cracked down on kar sewaks at Ayodhya, Mr Yadav has of late diluted his anti-upper caste stand and has been wooing traders—considered the mainstay of BJP support at one time—by promising the abolition of sales tax. He has spurned the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid, Syed Abdullah Bukhari, and thus projected the unified Dal, which has been wooing him, in a poor light.

Interestingly, both Mr Yadav and Mr V.P. Singh have of late begun to talk about 10 per cent job reservation for the poor among the upper castes in a bid to make a dent on the BJP's upper caste votebank.

In reshaping their strategies, all the non-BJP parties appear to have taken cognizance of the fact that strident secularism no longer has a place in the forthcoming Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh. Also secularism as a single-point agenda may not be enough to garner votes.

Predictably, the BJP has been watching this development with a certain amount of nervous interest. For instance, Mr Yadav's statement that there should be no winners or losers in the settlement of the Ayodhya dispute was immediately seized upon by the BJP. The party spokesperson, Ms Sushma Swaraj, went to the extent of demanding that the Samajwadi Party leader state his intentions to rebuild a mosque at Ayodhya.

* BJP Said Counting on 'Video Rath' Impact

94AS0068H Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 24 Oct 93 p 30

[Article by Sabina Sehgal: "BJP Video-Raths Raring To Go"]

[Text] New Delhi, Oct 23—Even before the [BJP] Bharatiya Janata Party has officially released its manifesto (scheduled for October 25), it has got its media blitzkrieg ready for the forthcoming elections in the four northern states and Delhi.

Starting November 3, the electorate in these areas will be bombarded by specially-created video films, flashed on larger-than-life screens. After ten days of intensive screening in the Capital, these films and the state-of-the-art equipment will travel to the 20 highest-populated cities of Rajasthan, UP [Uttar Pradesh] and Madhya Pradesh. Himachal Pradesh has been left out from the schedule, largely because the hilly terrain there will make it difficult to transport the material quickly.

Already, the BJP has hired all of the 125 vans and 20 megascreens from the Jain Studios of Dr J.K. Jain (considering the problems that the Jain Satellite has run into, this is just as well for the BJP since the other political parties will be deprived of his equipment during the election).

Other than the advertisement campaign that has been prepared by B.K. Swamy, the BJP has specially commissioned five films that will form the major component of the campaign package. The first film is entitled "Betrayal" and is devoted almost entirely to the "misdeeds" of the Prime Minister, Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao. "Crusade" deals with the BJP's "committed fight against pseudo-secularism." This film will deal with all the issues that have been taken up by the BJP, other than the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Of course, the film from which the BJP hopes to gain the maximum political mileage from will be "December 6" devoted entirely to the events that led to the demolition of the Babri Masjid. "Janadesh Yatra" is a film on the various national leaders' recent yatra and the "overwhelming response" that they received from the people of the country.

In addition to these, the BJP has prepared special films for each of the four states which deal with the performance of the BJP government there. Delhi has obviously been excluded from this category.

However, despite claims by BJP leaders that these films are "immensely engrossing," each film will be accompanied by a half an hour of Chitrahaar (excerpts from Hindi film songs) before and after the screening of the film.

Mr Pramod Mahajan, the BJP general secretary who is heading the party's election committee for these elections, says that there are going to be several other ingredients that will form part of the media strategy of the BJP. However, he is not willing to articulate all the plans at this stage.

Despite the raucous infighting that has accompanied the finalisation of the BJP's list of candidates, Mr Mahajan believes that the BJP is still far better off than most political parties. "Even minor ripples in the internal functioning of the BJP are projected as major waves by the media," he says.

He insists that unlike other parties, the BJP did not have parallel lists drawn up by different factional leaders in the states. "Each list was the result of unanimous decisions taken by a 12-member committee, in which all major leaders of the state in question were present," he avers.

However, he is far less forthcoming on the question of finances, particularly in light of the recent announcement of Mr Advani that all contributions to the BJP will have to be made in cheques.

"We are facing a problem of finances but I do believe that elections cannot be won on the basis of money power alone. We won the 1977 elections without money and I am 200 percent confident that we will win the elections in all the five states with a fair majority this time as well," he says.

• BJP Prospects Seen Brightening

94AS0067A Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 25 Oct 93 pp 11-12

[Article by Swapan Dasgupta: "Poll Prospects of BJP on Upswing"]

[Text] An Indian election campaign attracts its share of political tourists intent on imbibing the hurly-burly of the world's largest functioning democracy. One such visitor to Delhi earlier this month was Dr David Butler whose studies of British general elections since 1950 are compulsory reading for all buffs.

Having dabbled in the three Indian general elections since 1984 and contributed to the evolution of the Index of Opposition Unity (IOU), as a yardstick for forecasting and analysis, Dr Butler now finds himself in a methodological bind. The problem emanates from the shifting equations that have rendered both traditional non-Congressmen and the IOU somewhat irrelevant, in North India at least.

FAULT LINE

For a start, non-Congressism of the variety promoted by Ram Manohar Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan which fructified in the elections of 1977 and to a lesser extent, 1989 is well and truly dead. Following L.K. Advani's rath yatra in 1990 and the demolition of the disputed Babri structure on December 6 last year, the ideological fault line is between the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] on the one hand and the Center-Left formations on the other. Whereas in the past it was the Congress which clearly benefited from multi-cornered contests and a low IOU, the 1991 election established an alternative pattern in the Hindi heartland. Today, there is growing evidence to suggest that it is the BJP which is the prime beneficiary of triangular and quadrangular contests, while the Congress stands to gain in situations where, ironically, the conventional IOU is highest. In Bihar, the same logic works to the advantage of the Janata Dal.

The prospect of psephology being turned upside down may be faintly amusing to those who attach priority to social equations at the grassroots over mindless quantitative methods. But the point is worth stressing, if only to understand a paradoxical feature of the forthcoming assembly elections in November: that in purely psephological terms the BJP is the underdog in all the states barring Uttar Pradesh. Such an assessment may be contrary to conventional wisdom and the more triumphant assertions

of the sangh parivar, but the 1991 election which established the new parameters of competitive politics conveys a different story.

To begin with, the Congress improved its tally both in terms of popular votes and seats. It won 26 of the 40 Lok Sabha seats in Madhya Pradesh and 13 of the 25 seats in Rajasthan. In Himachal Pradesh, the party drew level with the BJP, but was ahead in popular votes, in Delhi, it won only two of the seven seats, but was behind the BJP by merely 18,529 votes. Even this deficit was removed in the New Delhi by-election in 1992 when Rajesh Khanna won by a convincing margin. Therefore, if 1991 is seen as the benchmark of the new politics, the Congress enters the November elections as the clear favorite in three BJP-ruled states and Delhi.

Second, in these areas there is a direct correlation between the Congress advance and the decline and fragmentation of the Janata Dal. In 1989, the Janata Dal-Left combine won a total of 18 parliamentary seats from this region, including 12 from Rajasthan; two years later, it lost all the seats. It is significant that 13 of these seats were wrested by the Congress in 1991, four (all in Rajasthan) going to the BJP and one to the Bahujan Samaj Party. In short, far from the increased IOU helping the "opposition" BJP, there seems to be a pattern of voter interchangeability within a range of anti-BJP parties. This, in turn, prompts the question of whether or not the post-1991 situation should result in the IOU being substituted by another category, say Index of Secularist Unity. Certainly, the inverse relationship between the success of the BJP and a high level of ISY [expansion not given] makes such a methodological break attractive. It also contributes to a greater understanding of the most important schism in contemporary politics.

DIFFERENT SCENARIO

Uttar Pradesh of course presents marginally different scenario. The 1991 election resulted in the BJP increasing its strength dramatically from eight parliamentary seats in 1989 to 50 (of the 81 where voting took place during the general election) in 1991. In the state assembly, its strength rose from 57 to 221 in a House of 418 (seven seats were vacant) and it was able to form a government on its own. The BJP advance was matched by a corresponding decline in the position of the Congress. The party slumped from 15 parliamentary seats to five, and from 94 assembly seats to 47.

Despite the split in the party, the Janata Dal did not collapse as in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. It managed—along with the CPI—a respectable showing of 22 Lok Sabha seats, with the SJP [expansion not given] winning an additional four. The performance would have been far more impressive had the Janata parivar not squandered away its electoral energies in internecine warfare. Assuming that the Janata Dal and the SJP votes transferred to each other in toto, a united party would have succeeded in snatching 14 seats from the BJP and three from the Congress. Such a process would have made it the largest party in the Uttar Pradesh, a fact which may explain why there is concern in the anti-BJP camp at the failure of V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav to project a united front.

Indeed, it is somewhat inexplicable that Yadav is showing inordinate faith in the ability of a Samajwadi Party-BSP alliance to meet the BJP challenge. There is as yet nothing to suggest that the supporters of the two parties are inclined to transfer their votes to each other. But even assuming a one-to-one transfer is possible, the 1991 results indicate that the Mulayam Singh-Kanshi Ram alliance would have wrested an additional six parliamentary seats, three from the BJP and an equal number from the Janata Dal. This would have still left the BJP with 47 Lok Sabha seats from Uttar Pradesh.

EMERGING PATTERN

The fact that such an alliance would not have had any impact on the already-truncated Congress is, however revealing and could go some way in explaining the ruling party's undercover attempts to nurture the combine. Unlike the other three states and Delhi where a floating "secularist" vote favors the Congress, there is an emerging pattern of overlap between the Congress and the BJP in Uttar Pradesh. More rigorous field surveys could reveal the pattern, but in their absence the voting pattern in the 15 parliamentary constituencies where Congress candidates were elected in 1989 may offer some clues. In 1991, the Congress retained four of these seats, two were won by the Janata Dal, and nine were wrested by the BJP. Clearly, any further erosion of support for the Congress can only prove directly beneficial to the BJP, a reason Narasimha Rao is at pains to demonstrate that his party is still a factor in Uttar Pradesh.

There is an additional worry for the Prime Minister. Even if there is a convincing case for the earlier IOU being replaced by an ISU that is inimical to the electoral fortunes of the BJP, voters are more than objects of psephological jugglery. In the final analysis, people vote not according to arithmetic precision but in line with the chemistry of politics. Having nullified a time-tested electoral yardstick by invoking a volatile cocktail of mythology and history, the BJP could prove psephology wrong again if this November it transforms ISU into a more potent index—the Index of Hindu Consolidation.

Janata Dal

• Janata Dal Attempt to Woo Dalits Viewed

93AS1042C Varanasi AJ in Hindi 12 Jul 93 p 6

[Article by Abhinav Kautilya: "Why Call Them 'Dalit Sena'? What Will Bommai Say"]

[Text] Mr. Rampujan Patel, the Janata Dal legislator, is a very naive man. We have never met him face-to-face, so it is difficult to say if he is a real simpleton or if he just becomes simple once in a while. Being simple is a cute act. If a person becomes an expert at this act, then he can easily get rid of our country's equally simple police. We are doubting him because of a letter he wrote to the Janata Dal president, Mr. Bommai. In this letter he asked Mr.

Bommai why a sub-group called Dalit Sena has emerged within the Janata Dal. Is this sub-group really within the party [Hindi "dal"], or is it in quicksand [Hindi "daldal"]? He has attacked this so-called sub-group and also warned that this sub-group, which claims to uphold social justice, is actually not helping the dalits.

What is it that Mr. Patel fails to understand here? I myself am at a loss to understand it also. The fact is that the meaning of the word "dalit" is too difficult for me to understand. I heard that this word was used in some era by one group of people to describe another. About 43 years ago, a constitution was passed in a country called Bharatkhand in Jambu Dweep [mythological continent]. In this constitution, they made everyone equal—dalits, non-dalits, and high- and low-caste people.

There was no dalit before that. They never existed in any era in our country. They never existed in any phase of our civilization. However, it is surprising that when everyone became equal after independence, this new name was invented. The newly invented coin could become a wheel in the political vehicle; however, it could not move. The reason was that it was never recognized as a coin. It is not a wheel, either. It is round; therefore, it is being used as a wheel. It is like children picking up a round lid from a can and using it as a wheel that they run after.

That is the kind of vehicle poor children can have. It is not shiny and does not run with a battery or a mechanism like the rich children's toys. It moves when pushed by hands. The children do not worry about its being run down. The hand, after all, is made to work; it is not made just to eat golgappa [spicy snack].

As for the question about the army [sena], we know only one army—the Indian army. We heard that there is a state in India called Bihar where there are a lot of senas [armies]. Whoever wants to can establish a sena. The people there still believe that they cannot even cook khichdi [cooked mixture of rice and lentils] without a sena. That is why they have formed a sena just to get justice. Similarly, this Dalit Sena has been formed within the Janata Dal to get justice.

However, Legislator Patel's reference to the Dalit Sena indicates that he does not mind it as much as he minds the admission of Bhola Singh and Revati Raman Singh into it. The truth is that even after all the time that has passed since independence, no one is willing to admit that V.P. Singh or Pundit Dandvate are fighting the war of social justice. What will they do now? One has to beat the drum that is hung from one's neck.

What I am trying to say is that only people belonging to specific castes or factions are eligible to fight for social justice, and this has become a rule here. Now, how can we respond to this crazy trend? They have been fighting a war for social justice even in the United States for decades. But no one there raised the question of whether the supporter of social justice has to be recruited from a specific social or caste group. Whether this is a philosophy or a concept, we cannot honestly say.

It appears that when they saw that the war for social justice was not successful under the Janata Dal flag, they decided to use the strategy of establishing the Dalit Sena and fight the war of social justice directly. The truth is that I am acting stupid by calling this effort a war. I am saying this because whenever the question of a war arises, one needs an army. They will say, "Hey, mister, you are talking about war, and you added the word 'sena' or 'army' with it; therefore, nothing is wrong there. After all, a sena or an army will fight the war, not the cloth weavers."

The fact is that there is no need to fight or to have arguments here. The democracy is a government of rules and regulations. If there is injustice in society or discrimination against a person, then that person can follow the proper procedures to correct it. Fighting or having a war will not help here. We have been trying continuously since our independence to end social injustice, and we have been more successful in this effort than the Dalit Sena will be in the next 100 years.

It is also true that the policy of reservations cannot be called social justice, but injustice. After all, how can reservations go side by side with equality? It is analogous to eating brown sugar in beetle leaf. This is inconceivable. The value of equality is much more prevalent and benevolent than social justice. The question of opportunity can be taken care of through it. There is no need for reservations or quotas here, especially when they are based on caste. This is true because this way, one's skills are not ignored, because it can only hurt everyone, and no one will benefit from it. This society must provide full opportunity for improving one's skills and talents.

There is no rule to indicate that talent is born in specific families, dynasties, or castes. It can be born in a hut or in a palace. There was a time when talent was discovered in the gurukuls [schools] in the jungles. Now they say that talent is found in convent schools, and that talents are developed to their fullest there.

In any case, what can Mr. Bommai say about what kind of animal this Dalit Sena is? I can explain it much better. Mr. Patel has wasted a postage stamp worth one rupee for nothing. The fact is that the Dalit Sena is not Mr. Patel's "bala" [problem]; actually, it is an "abla" [helpless female]. This abla badly needs protection from the government or responsible citizens so she can return to her home respectfully. Instead of doing so, this honored legislator was asking questions. Instead of going to a police station to ask these questions, he went to ask the Bhisham Pitahma [Mahabharata character]. In front of him, Draupdi [Arjuna's wife] was bared of all her clothes while he sat there. Dharitshtar, of course, was blind from birth. Even if he had his eyes, how could he fight with his wayward children?

Why is he asking so many questions about an abla? Good people stay at arm's length from such affairs. Even in his zeal, he asked this question. I would say, "Mister, go ahead and protect this abla." Otherwise, the people who get hold of her will cash on her everywhere.

Those who are fond of armies do not join politics. They go to some recruiting office and join the army. Because of these various senas, the well respected name of the army is being stigmatized. The government said many times that it would ban all kinds of senas; however, this has not been done so far. I say that if you really want to play politics, brother, go ahead and form a dal [party]; leave the idea of [calling a party] sena alone.

It is not necessary to give the name "army" to a group of clowns. The way they are forming senas in many states, we would not be surprised to find all of these mandlis, parishads, sanghs, [all used to identify parties] and so on starting to use the word sena to describe themselves, just as we have seen as public meetings are now called rallies.

It is correct to ask, if we have the Janata Dal, then why do we need a sena within it? If this dal is not very effective, then let us dismiss it. Who says that one must form a dal for survival? There is no dearth of these dals, anyway. If we want to fight for social justice, we need neither a dal nor a sena for it. We need expert strategists to gather popular support in every area and obtain decisions from the Supreme Court to end all inequalities. In the United States, they strive for social justice using this method. Many social inequalities were taken care of by these means. America's black people now have the same rights as its white people.

Mahatma Gandhi started the cyclone of social justice without forming a sena, and even mountains flew away in front of him like small pebbles. The fact that he was not greedy about a chair in Parliament or the prime minister's seat is a totally different story. Now they are forming senas just for a position, and not for social justice. How can one get the chair position, and how can one become prime minister by forming some organization? That is what lurks behind this whole process.

Mr. Rampujan Patel is, after all, a simpleton. He does not know all the tactics. It appears that he has been hurt somehow. Perhaps he is hurt because someone has gotten a position, and he feels that person did not deserve it. It can be further explained by the example where, in the convention of the scheduled caste and tribe people, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi is given the highest position instead of Mr. Ram Dhan.

He should not be worried at all about such a situation. It happens all the time. If one has put his head in the mortar, then why should he worry about the falling pestle?

* Janata Dal Factions Continue to Jockey for Position

* Janata Dal (A) Hurting Itself

93AS1065A New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 17 Jul 93 p 10

[Article by Om Prakash: Janata Dal (A) is Voting Against Itself in Parliament"]

[Text] New Delhi, 16 July—The Janata Dal (A) meeting today, rather than discussing no confidence motions against the government, ended up discussing no confidence in itself. The 20-member parliamentary group clearly said in its meeting that there is no future for party members under present circumstances. The party and its members need a tether to keep them in line, and all this must be arranged without delay. Ajit Singh has always insisted that it would be easier to make a deal if they were all united. His insistence is influenced by his helplessness. If this Parliament breaks up, then there is the fear that Ajit Singh will also be thrown out of the political margin. After reviewing the political developments, the Janata Dal (A) legislators gave him the authority to make a one-time deal. In other words, they imposed the restriction on him that whatever deal he makes, he must call a meeting of Parliament members before agreeing on it. The final decision will not be his; it will be the parliamentary group's. If there are still differences, then everyone will go their own way.

The parliamentary group of the party could not discuss the issue of a no-confidence motion against the Congress Party. The general consensus was that it was useless to discuss the issue. It is not clear whether the Congress Party needs the Janata Dal (A)'s endorsement. Therefore, it was useless to discuss the issue at that time. It was agreed that when Congress met with them, it would then be discussed. These decisions would not be made by Ajit Singh alone. Whatever is decided will be decided by the parliamentary group. However, the authority to have a one-time discussion, given to Ajit Singh, is being touted as the parliamentary group's trust in him. But this privilege was given to him just because he is their leader. This right to leadership was given to him by many for personal greed. It is because Ajit Singh has started talks about Arjun Singh-Sharad Pawar on the one hind and, at the same time, is carrying on talks with the prime minister's camp. Perhaps this would pave the way for some of them to get into power. However, they must pay attention to the fact that the party's Parliament members continue to stay in Delhi. Why? One can easily understand.

Ajit Singh's old friend, Subraynam Swami, who used to control the Ajit faction after the Janata Dal breakup, today pulled a fast one on Ajit Singh again. Through Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav, he decided on today's date to divide the Janata Dal. In the central hall of Parliament, Swami met with several members of the group yesterday. These legislators included Rajnath Sonkar Shastri, Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav, Ram Sunder Das, Ramnihor Rai, Harpal Pawar, Ramsharan Das, and Roshan Lal. Swami said last time that he had broken up the Janata Dal. The members of this parliamentary group were also accused of taking money from the Congress Party. Swami did not exactly break up the Janata Dal; however, he used Ram Lakhan Singh he stop Ajit Singh from talking against the prime minister. He also made sure that Ajit Singh was not able to play any role in the internal strife of the Congress Party. Ajit Singh had to say that the parliamentary committee was responsible for investigating Harshad's accusation. All future decisions will be made based on the facts revealed in this investigation. The reason for Swami's pressure is not to have a principled fight against corruption, but just to see if there is any proof or not. This means that if the committee does not have any compelling proof to pass a

no-confidence motion against the government, then Ajit Singh must be working with it.

While analyzing the political situation, the committee members also found that the Congress Party knew that the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] or the National and Left Fronts do not support holding elections at this time. Narasimha Rao's being prime minister is strengthening them, and it is also making Congress weaker. Actually, these are the Congress Party members who want the opposition to help them get rid of Narasimha Rao. Not only Arjun Singh and Sharad Pawar are fidgety over this issue, but all Congress Party members are impatient also. At this date, however, they are not capable of replacing Mr. Rao. The possibility of some dealing for the Janata Dal (A) hinges on this point, and that is the internal strife of Congress. They also thought of joining Janata Dal (B); however, the Janata Dal has formed a strategy such that they cannot discuss uniting with each other, even though they want to. The Janata Dal has deliberately handed control over talks of unity to the hands of Sharad Yadav.

* Factionalism Threatens Janata Dal (B)

93AS1065B New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 21 Jul 93 p 10

[Article by Hemant Sharma: "Mahabharat in Uttar Pradesh Janata Dal (B) Unit"]

[Text] Lucknow, 20 July—There is a major fight going on within the Janata Dal (B) in Uttar Pradesh. The state party president, Harikeval Prasad, challenged the central leadership of the party. Yesterday, he called a meeting and declared former Prime Minister V.P. Singh's interference in the state party's affairs unconstitutional and anti-party. The Harikeval Prasad and V.P. camps are pitted against each other over the party's organizational elections. The party's organizational elections were supposed to be held yesterday.

Harikeval Prasad did a lot of manipulating and lying in making the list of party members for this election. Central Inspector Nitish Kumar also found the accusations about fraudulent practices to be correct. That is why the party's general secretary, Sharad Yadav, postponed the elections scheduled for yesterday at the insistence of former Prime Minister V.P. Singh. Harikeval Prasad issued a statement yesterday about the postponement of elections and criticized the party's central leadership. He later called a regular press conference and challenged the validity of postponing the elections, saying it was anti-party.

Meanwhile, the group of Revati Raman Sigh, the leader of the party's Vidhan Sabha members, said that even the central election officers have admitted that there were some changes made in the voter lists in eight districts. Mr. Nitish Kumar, the Central Government's inspector, came to investigate these complaints, and issued a report. The central election officer, Ira Seghin, also said that until these complaints are taken care of, the election should not be held. However, in his hurry to take over the party, Harikeval Prasad is not paying any attention to election rules. He has declared the voting lists in his favor in four districts to be valid. The state Election Commissioner, Jaydip Barar, has declared these lists illegal. The membership dues were collected after the deadline in Faizabad, Siddharth Nagar, Bareilly, and Jhansi. Therefore, the state election commissioner did not approve these lists. Harikeval Prasad, however, went out of his jurisdiction and declared them to be legal. Such misappropriations occurred in more than half the districts of the state.

The fact is that there is competition to control the party, because the state Vidhan Sabha elections are getting closer. If the election scheduled for yesterday had not been canceled, then there was fear of a bloody battle in state headquarters. The people who were ready for the election brought armed groups with them, because they believed that the party must be fully organized before it issues tickets. State Party President Harikeval Prasad says that elections of council members and presidents of district and city councils have taken place abruptly. Therefore, it was imperative that elections of state presidents and national delegates be held also. Mr. Prasad made an accusation that the party president Bommai was not aware of the postponement of elections in the state. This cancellation occurred as a result of V.P. Singh's interference.

While it is true that more than 50 city and district units of the party have been surveyed, this was done in a Congress Party style. The reason was that Chanderjit Yadav's Congress Party mind was behind it. The election was not held anywhere, because the first election was also canceled due to similar complaints. The party sent the central inspector to investigate these allegations. After finishing his investigation on 3-4 June in Lucknow, Nitish Kumar concluded that some misappropriations took place in the election. He recommended that either the elections be held again in eight disputed districts—Aligarh, Siddharth Nagar, Faizabad, Jhansi, Bareilly, Mathura, and Gorakhpur—or the complaints over its validity be taken care of. It was also decided that the remaining complaints would be jointly dealt with by Harikeval Prasad, Revati Raman Singh, and state Election Commissioner Jaydip Singh Barar. At the same time, they were told that district elections would not be held until the inspector gave his approval.

Soon after this meeting, Harikeval Prasad decided on election dates in three or four large districts without any inspectors. Benares was one of them. He argued that these elections were decided upon even before the visit by the election commissioner. Harikeval Prasad appointed four people, the presidents of four districts. They are from his own village of Barhaj. The four leaders who came in second in the Benares elections were not included in the state council. They were replaced by the leaders whose records so far indicate that they lost even their election security deposits. This party, which claims to work for social justice, has declared five high caste and four lower caste persons the leaders of the Vidhan Sabha teams in these fake elections. Mr. Anhar Jamal Lari, who lost by only 2,000 votes to the BJP candidate during the last elections, was not included. However, fake leaders like P.N. Singh Yadav and Ram Chandauli were! The same is true of Gajipur. The news arriving from Allahabad indicates that the name of Revati Raman Singh, the leader of

the dismissed Vidhan Sabha, is not on the list. Kedar Nath Singh is missing from the Gorakhpur list. The same kind of misappropriation took place in Faizabad.

Even though the elections were canceled yesterday, Harikeval Prasad called the meeting of the state council. It was well attended. From among the 56 legislators, a little more than two dozen former legislators failed to attend. Revati Raman Singh, the party leader, and Mukhtar Anis, secretary general, did not attend the meeting either. The other general secretary of the party, Kedar Nath Singh, did not even know about it. He welcomed the cancellation of the election. Meanwhile, General Secretary Jaydip was present there and registered his objection. He said it was not a meeting of the elected state council members; therefore, it could only be called a meeting of some of the party members. In this meeting, Harikeval Prasad pushed the resolution condemning cancellation of the elections.

Harikeval Prasad has changed his stand in the disputed districts. He ignored the committee established by the central inspector and formed a family council. He appointed such controversial people as P.N. Singh Yadav, D.P. Bora, and Anwar Ahmed to the committee. These leaders are also involved in the whole scandal. Instead of taking care of the misappropriations, Harikeval Prasad formed a committee of these very people. If he had paid attention to misappropriations at the very beginning, then the election would not have been canceled. In the statewide campaign for membership, 8,000 members were registered. The authenticity of this figure is suspect, because within 20 days of this membership campaign, 250,000 rupees were deposited in the central party's office. We must pay attention to the fact that the party's first general secretary, Mukhtar Anis, approved a list that was held back. One Mitan Sari approved the list, even though he has never been a member of the Janata Dal. In this whole mess, neither the quotas of Dalits nor of women were met. What will happen to social justice?

* V.P. Singh's Movement

93AS1065C New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 26 Jul 93 p 2

[JANSATTA Article: "V.P. Singh Decides to Begin 'March for Justice'"]

[Text] Lucknow, 25 July (JANSATTA)—The announcement by former Prime Minister V.P. Singh not to run for the Lok Sabha elections shows clearly that his Nyay Yatra [march for justice] in Uttar Pradesh has reached a more decisive point. His expedition will start on 16 August.

His opponents in the Janata Dal are, of course, upset by Mr. Singh's announcement, and his supporters are also running helter and skelter. Soon after Mr. Singh's announcement, the state Janata Dal, which has divided into several groups, called a meeting and passed a resolution that the absence of Mr. Singh in the next Lok Sabha election will hurt the forces campaigning for social justice.

This resolution passed by the Janata Dal workers reminds us of the one passed forcibly at the backward castes conference. This conference was called by the Janata Dal in May, prior to Mr. Singh's announcement of his Nyay Yatra. This resolution said that some leaders are actively making Mr. Singh's efforts at social justice fail. The resolution clearly said that unity in the party cannot be had at the cost of Mr. Singh.

Mr. Ramvilas Paswan, national vice president of the Janata Dal, and Harikeval Prasad, the state party president, both commented about Mr. Singh's announcement—"many people consider me a hindrance to unity among the opposition parties." Mr. Prasad says that whoever condemns V.P. Singh supports Brahmin culture. Those people want to bury the recommendations made by the Mandal Commission.

Not only Mulayam Singh Yadav, leader of the Samajwadi Janata Party, but also some other Janata Dal leaders are trying to show down Mr. Singh. The Janata Dal leaders in Uttar Pradesh did not like the comment made by the National General Secretary Sharad Yadav. Mr. Yadav said that some leaders were forcing their egos into the path of unity. At the same time, he said that he was confident that if he was given an open hand, he could bring Mulayam Singh and Ajit Singh closer.

The influential group of the Janata Dal is trying to identify the enemies within the party. Harikeval Prasad, the state party president, announced appointment of the heads of the 52 district units, even though the Revati Raman group had opposed this action. Mr. Prasad's announcement is an open declaration of war. He has also announced a 12-member election committee. It is believed that this committee will approve an election manifesto document within 15 days and send it to the national working committee. Mr. D.P. Vora, an influential leader of the state party, said that he wants to help the party move faster and take as much advantage as possible of Mr. Singh's Nyay Yatra. This Nyay Yatra has received good popular support so far.

Mr. Singh had announced that once he steps out of Delhi, he will not return until the Mandal Commission report was implemented wholly. After this announcement, the next step of his Nyay Yatra became even more important.

Mr. Singh will leave Delhi on 16 August for his Nyay Yatra. He will speak at the public meeting at Gaziabad on 17 August, Buland Shahr on the 18th, in Aligarh on the 20th, in Itawa on the 21st, in Ferozpur on the 22nd, and in Farukhhabad on the 23rd. Afterwards, he will go on to Madhya Pradesh and other states.

It is a coincidence that the first stops of Mr. Singh's Nyay Yatra are in the region that is the stronghold of Ajit Singh and Mulayam Singh. One party member commented, "We want to let the local leaders know that only Mr. Singh can be recognized as the national leader of the Dalits and backward groups."

After 23 August, Mr. Singh will go to Jhansi on 31 August. On 1 September, he will speak in a joint rally at Fatehpur. Afterwards, he will go to Allahabad.

* V.P. Singh Interviewed on Mandal Emphasis

94AS0044G Calcutta SUNDAY in English
11 Sep 93 pp 23-25

[Interview with V.P. Singh]

[Text] On 22 August, Janata Dal leader and former Prime Minister V.P. Singh left New Delhi on what is being termed as his self-imposed exile. Singh has vowed not to return to the capital till the Centre implemented the recommendations of the Mandal Commission. He mounted his Sadhbhavana Rath (Amity Rath) and rode out of the city, promising that his urns would return, if the government did nothing about the quota system. But before he left, Singh spoke to SUNDAY about a gamut of issues and his stand regarding them. Here are some excerpts from the interview:

SUNDAY: Many people feel that your threat (of going into exile) is a political stunt. How do you react to that?

V.P. Singh: I've never defended myself. It is for the people to draw their conclusions.

Question: Do you think the situation is so bad that you have to resort to such dramatic actions before the government does something?

Answer: After a long struggle we have been able to get this (acceptance of the Mandal recommendations). Then the government is trying to scuttle it by saying that even if a backward-class person's land is below ceiling, if two-thirds of it is irrigated, he will not get the benefit. Even if a state government employee rises from the rank of a clerk to become a section officer, his family will not be eligible. So it is necessary to exert people's pressure.

Question: Pressure for what? Do you want the implementation of the original Mandal report or the one based on economic criteria as suggested by the Supreme Court?

Answer: As far as the economic criteria is concerned, it's ridiculous. The substance is being taken away. In UP, the ceiling is 12 acres. If somebody has got eight acres of irrigated land, does he become a rich man? If from a clerk one becomes a section officer, does he become a big boss? By hitting at this level, the substance is being knocked off.

Question: But the suggestion regarding the economic criteria was made by the Supreme Court.

Answer: For all practical purposes, there is no criteria for the scheduled castes (SC). Even half the reservation quota for them is not being filled. Those sections cannot run a straight race and you are forcing them to run a hurdle race. Why are the SC quotas not being filled?

Question: Why?

Answer: Because you're not allowing it.

Question: In what way?

Answer: I ask you, why had the government not filled the quota when there was no economic criteria.

Question: You were also once a member of a government—a Congress government—which hadn't done it either.

Answer: As chief minister of UP, I passed an order—it is on record. They (the officers) used to say they couldn't find the right candidates. I used to say, that's all humbug. If you don't find candidates, call another interview within three months. Only SC boys will come. You select the best among them.

Question: But what about the time when you were Prime Minister?

Answer: We brought Mandal.

Question: Sitaram Kesri has talked in Parliament of a Syndicate Bank SC/ST employees' promotion in which your government had gone in appeal against a reservation order. What was that all about?

Answer: That was one stray case. The BJP had withdrawn support and the date was one week before the Janata government fell.

Question: Was that appeal an aberration, an oversight?

Answer: I think, at that time, the officers knew that the government was going and they had their way. But I had objected. It's on record.

Question: How important is Mandal going to be in the coming state elections?

Answer: The major issue is the sharing of power by the deprived sections.

Question: You don't think the masjid is going to be the main issue?

Answer: These issues will be there, but the major issue on the historical agenda is that the deprived sections have become conscious of their rights and they want power. And this is going to dictate the politics of the coming decade. Within three years, we have forced the various parties...

Question: To accept Mandal?

Answer: Mandal is one thing. No, forced the various parties to realise that in the power structure, the deprived sections have to be given a place. You will see by the end of the century, 95 per cent of the chief ministers will form this section. This is the major transformation we have effected. Which is a far greater change than Mandal.

Question: Since you feel that social justice is going to be major issue, would it be wrong to say that you are going on an extended election campaign rather than launching a movement?

Answer: Well, we are in politics, we are a party. Every party is serious about elections. Why be hypocritical about it? At the same time, I've said this is a movement which is bigger than elections. I should not be judged on the electoral prospects of the Janata Dal, but on the bigger movement we have set in.

Question: Which is?

Answer: That we have forced everyone to follow and give place to these sections. And, in fact, no one will be able to resist it. It is here the success lies. This is why I want to say that the movement is far more important than the elections. Election results may be anything. Some may win, some may lose. Some may be wiped away. But what is more important is this awakening of the people of these sections and their capturing the commanding heights of power. In this, I am not going to fail.

Question: Do you claim personal credit for this?

Answer: Not personal credit. But this is a process that we are identified with. It's a historical process. Ultimately, the Janata Dal's political success will depend upon the sagacity of the JD leaders. This will not bind the fate of this government. So, to me it is of little concern who wins or who doesn't win, so far as this principle wins.

Question: You see yourself as a second Jayaprakash Narayan?

Answer: No, JP was a very big man. I'm a very ordinary person. It's not a question of the individual. V.P. Singh may be thrown in the wastepaper basket of history. Or JD may be thrown out. I am not much concerned about that. What concerns me is the thing for which we have given up the government.

What is an election? Governments come and go. But they don't make history. So many governments have come and gone. Who has made history? Very few. So what we have effective is a historical change. It's of historical value, not merely news value.

Question: Let me put before you a cynical view: you are giving Mandal so much importance because you and the JD did not have any real solution for the Ayodhya problem. You had not taken a clear stand. What is your stand on Ayodhya?

Answer: We were the ones with the very clear stand. That the matter should be referred to the Supreme Court under Article 138(2) to decide the title suit and everything, not merely for advice and some arbitrary reference. A binding judgment could come out of that, and the government should firmly implement it.

Question: What about the rebuilding of the masjid?

Answer: I want to ask a question of the judiciary. According to them (the Madhya Pradesh High Court) the Congress wrongfully removed the BJP government (in MP). The judges said that it should be restored. If the BJP has wrongfully removed the masjid, should not the judiciary render the same justice?

Question: So you hold the judiciary responsible for being lax in this matter?

Answer: No, I'm not saying that. I'm just putting a poser. Because there cannot be two standards for justice. And judiciary should not have any fears. The executive may have its fears—you've seen this terribly scared government. Those who have committed wrongful acts, action should be taken against them. There's no compromise on that.

Question: What happens if the government takes its own time about Mandal? Will V.P. Singh ever change his mind about coming back to Delhi?

Answer: There is no question. V.P. Singh has never changed his mind—I want to make one issue very clear...

Question: Yes, that's an accusation against you—that you always change your mind.

Answer: The accusation has started only after Mandal. Otherwise, I was the most honest person who keeps his word and gives everything for his word. And this accusation, whom are they hurling at? Who gave up the chief ministership for his word? Who for the pursuits of the cause he set himself in the finance ministry was thrown out of the ministry? Who for the same cause was virtually thrown out of the defence ministry? And for his own word gave up the prime ministership? And that person is pilloried in this country like a liar!

Question: But you did say that you would be a disaster as a PM and then accepted prime ministership?

Answer: The point is whenever it was (left to) V.P. Singh, V.P. Singh never changed his word. It was a circumstance where the Opposition was concerned, not me. At that stage, there was an atmosphere that the Congress government should not come. The left could not support a BJP-led government. The BJP could not support a left-headed government. Only a JD-headed government could be supported by both to see that the Congress was out. And the left by name mentioned me. It mounted to not letting down the Opposition. But I've learnt my lesson. I'll never accommodate the Opposition again.

* V.P. Singh Embrace of Mandal, Muslims Seen Backfiring

94AS0044F Calcutta SUNDAY in English 11 Sep 93 pp 20-22

[Article by Louise Fernandes: "The Exile and the Kingdom"]

[Text] The Raja has gone into exile. Former Prime Minister and Janata Dal leader V.P. Singh has vowed not to return to the capital unless the Centre implemented the Mandal Commission recommendations, fixing job quotas for scheduled castes(ST), scheduled tribes(SC) and other backward classes. Singh left New Delhi on 22 August, on a Sadhbhavana Rath (Amity Chariot) with the avowed aim of campaigning for social justice.

The convoy rolled out amidst cheers and slogans. "Raja nahin, fakir hai," ("A saint, not a king") chanted Janata Dal supporters, as Singh headed for his first destination, Ghaziabad, on the outskirts of Delhi. The former Prime Minister is slated for an extensive tour of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Madhya Pradesh (MP) in the first leg of his cross-country journey. Significantly, there are two major

states in the Hindi heartland that go to polls this November, along with Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh.

Political observers tend to consider Singh's programme as a kick-off to his party's electioneering and seem to derate his concern for the 'backwards' as a mere political bait.

But Janata Dal leaders insist that it is not so. "This is a fight for one's rights," backward-class leader Ram Vilas Paswan told SUNDAY. "There is no one more foolish than the man who does not fight and wrest his own rights."

Meera Kumar, daughter of the late Babu Jagjivan Ram, who was largely instrumental in getting reservations for the SC/ST, however, disagrees. It was mainly the upper-caste officers and politicians who had formulated and moved the quota system, she pointed out, and stressed that the earlier measures had not provoked the kind of unrest the Mandal issue did.

The difference lay in time, perhaps. Not quite, thinks Kumar. "It's not just that you do a good thing. It's also important to extend the area of goodwill. If you are doing a thing by creating ill-will, I think you are defeating the purpose of doing it," she says.

Kumar is a scathing critic of V.P. Singh's methods and fears that his campaign may prove counter-productive. "The gimmicks and the offensive language and the thoughtless moves ... have brought us to a stage of confrontation," she feels.

But Paswan differs. The end justifies the means, he suggests. "That [confrontation and violence] is bound to happen," he asserts, comparing the turmoil caused by the exorable rise of the 'backwards' to that of an earthquake.

Where exactly in this volatile scenario would one place Singh's latest programme? V.P. Singh has threatened not to enter the capital till the first backward class person is hired by the central government in implementing the Supreme Court judgment on the Mandal issue.

Ideally, he would like the original Mandal Commission report to be implemented in toto, which makes social and educational backwardness, and not an economic criterion, the ultimate justification for reservations. But he and his first lieutenant, Janata Dal's Parliamentary Party leader Sharad Yadav, dismiss the recommendations of the Prasad Committee that identified the "creamy layer" among the 'backwards' as "bad" and "counter to the spirit of Mandal." However, for the present, V.P. Singh would be happy if the Centre makes just one appointment in accordance with the revised Mandal system.

On the face of it, there is little justification for V.P. Singh's dramatic gesture. A number of leaders—the majority of them non-Congressmen—SUNDAY spoke to dismissed Mandal as a peripheral issue today.

Ajay Singh, a former MP from Agra, who was the deputy minister for railways in V.P. Singh's ministry, said that with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) also accepting Mandal, there was nothing to fight about. But the government's dilatory tactics in implementing the system, was causing concern, he conceded.

Even Sharad Yadav dropped his guard recently, when he said that his party's main campaign theme was going to be the Narasimha Rao government's economic policy. Mandal was an important issue, he said, but felt it ranked along with the questions of corruption and secularism.

Ajit Singh, chief of the Janata Dal(A) and another key player in Hindi-belt politics, also feels that Mandal has lost some of its appeal in recent times. "There are other emotional issues which have overtaken Mandal," he thinks. "People in UP and Bihar, who have left us [the JD parivar] because of the man dir/masjid issue are not going to come back on this issue. The vote bank will stay divided. It won't be swayed in favour of V.P. Singh if he undertakes this yatra."

What, then, according to him, are the main problems that are uppermost in the people's mind? "Corruption, non-governance, unemployment, the rapid rise of population, social and religious confrontation," he says.

The reaction in the Congress(I) camp is predictably vehement. Sitaram Kesri, the Congress' backward-class mascot and Union social welfare minister, questions the rationale behind V.P. Singh's theatrical exit from the capital. He argues that Singh could have implemented the Mandal recommendations when he was in power. Instead, one test case that came up under his administgration betrayed his insincerity.

Kesri points to the Syndicate Bank SC/ST Employees' Union, of which Paswan is a patron. It had gone to court against reservations for the backward groups in matters relating to promotions. The Supreme Court had ruled in favour of the employees on 10 August, 1990. On 17 September that year, the V.P. Singh government filed a review petition. But this was followed by a notification of the department of personnel, on 1 November, formally denying these reservation benefits. V.P. Singh is dismissive about the case (see interview), but Paswan is embarrassed.

But why is the government dithering? Kesri denies any such thing. "We have already given actual shape to the suggestions," he avers and claims that he is waiting for the concurrence of all parties. And V.P. Singh, says Kesri, is aware of the progress. His yatra therefore, is inspired by other factors, concludes the minister.

Ajit Singh harbours similar suspicions. "If he wants to go on a sort of pilgrimage for the uplift of the poor and the dalits, there can be no dispute about it," he submits, but doubts if V.P. Singh can ever be self-effacing.

And Singh's track record has indeed been questionable. There are umpteen instances when his deeds have not matched his professed intentions.

—When he resigned as the finance minister from Rajiv Gandhi's Cabinet, he said he would never leave the Congress. He left the party shortly afterwards.

—Having left the party, he said he would not fight the Allahabad by-election. But he did.

—He said he would not hold any office in the Janata Dal. And then went on to become its president.

—To woo Muslims votes, Singh had told the Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid that his party would have no truck with the BJP. But the National Front government at the Centre was formed with the BJP's support.

—He had confessed that he would be a "disaster" as a PM. In the end, he manipulated his way to the top slot.

—After his government fell, he said he did not want to be the leader of his party in Parliament. It took him nearly two years to relinquish that post.

And this time, too, it seems that Singh will march back to Delhi, despite his self-imposed exile. The condition he has set for his return is truly flimsy. The government can, any day, appoint a backward-class person under the Mandal recommendations.

Had he challenged the government to fill the entire 27 per cent quota as has been suggested by the commission, the exile would have been meaningful, chided one of his former colleagues.

But that may have also meant burning the bridges to Delhi for good.

* Ajit, Mulayam Singh Rivalry Seen Cause of Disunity in Janata

94AS0045G New Delhi INDIA TODAY in English 15 Sep 93 p 29

[Article by J.M. Ansari and D. Awasthi: "Still Fishing"]

[Text] The euphoria over the likelihood of non-BJP opposition unity triggered off by the no-confidence motion was shortlived. A month later, dissensions among the various parties and groups persist despite efforts by the Left parties, particularly Jyoti Basu. Mulayam Singh Yadav remains as obdurate on the issue as ever. And new developments such as V.P. Singh's decision to go on a self-imposed exile and Sharad Yadav's elevation as the Janata Dal Parliamentary Party leader have only increased the odds.

The Uttar Pradesh strongman's game is obvious. Like a political don, Mulayam wants unity on his terms, where he is both the boss and the kingmaker. Enjoying a wide support base in the state, Mulayam feels V.P. Singh and Ajit Singh have more to gain from an alliance with him than he himself. "While I was doing all the dirty work, others were enjoying themselves in air-conditioned comfort," he says of the Janata Dal leaders. By scuttling their attempts to forge an alliance with him, Mulayam wants to ensure that he has to share seats only with Kanshi Ram's BSP, thereby ensuring the victory of a large number of his loyalists. He hides his real strategy behind bluster: "The two of us are enough to defeat the BJP and form the government."

V.P. Singh, who has decided to stay out of the capital, is likely to utilise the time to tour the state. After his first tour recently which evoked an encouraging response, the former prime minister is believed to be aiming to tap Mulayam's vote bank of backwards and Muslims.

Though Sharad Yadav's elevation does not appear to have any direct bearing on the unity moves, it is still a measure of his increased importance to the party. Mulayam would rather not align forces at a time when the star of his long-time adversary is on the ascendant. In any case, it was V.P. Singh who was making the unity overtures, while Sharad Yadav and Mulayam maintained their mutual antipathy. For Mulayam an alliance with the Janata Dal would not only mean sharing seats but also being dependent on its support for his survival after the polls. An idea he doesn't relish.

Mulayam has also been trying to impress upon the Left parties to jettison V.P. Singh and join hands with him in Uttar Pradesh. At a meeting with CPI General Secretary Indrajit Gupta on August 18, Mulayam urged him to make up his mind quickly on the issue "as time was running out."

Mulayam's claims of taking on the BJP with Kanshi Ram's support are not all bluster. The two shared a harvest of 21 per cent votes to win 45 seats in the 1991 polls. Mulayam is in a unique bargaining position and realises that by steering clear of an alliance, he can effectively polarise the votes and provide a multi-cornered challenge to the BJP, his main electoral adversary. At the same time, he does not underestimate the BJP's strength in the state and is, therefore, keeping the doors to the Congress(I) open. His neutrality on the no-confidence motion underlined his intentions. After all, only the Congress(I) is likely to give him the pre-eminent position he is looking for if they come together to form a front or agree to an adjustment of seats.

When it comes to election preparedness, Mulayam is the clearest on strategy. The Janata Dal and its allies are still floundering and are counting basically on the public's disenchantment with the politics of corruption and communalism to see them through. V.P. Singh is concentrating on the Muslims, a vote bank that has traditionally been his. He is trying to woo them by seeking special reservations for the community, a strategy Mulayam is using against him by telling the backward classes that this would cut into their reservation quota. Like V.P. Singh, Ram Vilas Paswan too is only focusing on his traditional vote bank, the Harijans. And Ajit Singh's only interest seems to be to secure a king-making role in Uttar Pradesh and clip the wings of his arch rival, Mulayam.

In the final count, opposition unity remains elusive. Worse, the parties and groups yearning for it even lack a common strategy or ideology to pose a serious threat to the BJP. Unless, of course, V.P. Singh and his colleagues from the erstwhile Janata family are able to revive some of the old chemistry once again.

* Ajit Singh Backing Janata Dal Unity

94AS0007B New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 17 Sep 93 p 10

[Article by Om Prakash: "Ajit Assured of Janata Family Unity"]

[Text] New Delhi, 16 September—Mr. Ajit Singh, the Janata Dal (A) president, believes it is essential that the Janata Dal family is united. He believes that they will be united. All kinds of complaints have started to disappear. He also believes that a family built with the same elements cannot remain separate for long. No one opposes joining Mulayam Singh Yadav, either. Those who oppose Mulayam Singh are suffering from the same kind of bad luck as Chandra Swami and Narasimha Rao. The sooner Mulayam Singh leaves them to join his own family, the better it will be. Otherwise, Mulayam Singh will also learn that every step he is taking is benefiting the BJP.

Mr. Ajit Singh's respect and importance is increasing daily in the Janata Dal family. He surprised even the old Janata Dal associates by introducing the no-confidence motion against the Narasimha Rao government and risking the party's unity. He also has taken back the case regarding the Janata Dal election symbol, which was being tried by the election commission. This has increased his acceptance by other Janata Dal leaders. He also talks to V. P. Singh on the telephone. In addition, he has connections with Sharad Yadav and Ramvilas Paswan. This part of the Janata Dal family has begun to believe that it is meaningless to wait for an election coalition. It is important to offer the country a major issue. The Janata Dal must become the powerful axle of the National and the Left Wing Fronts. The party workers are also pressuring these leaders not to destroy historic powers by their own minor squabbles.

Ajit Singh believes that the vehicle of Janata Dal's unity has started now, and that it will not stop over the wheeling and dealing of seats. The unity of the party is essential for forming a national issue. The Janata Dal (A) has already offered to unite, and a resolution to this effect was presented by the national working committee. The delay was caused by the Janata Dal leaders. They have some differences over the unity. Ajit does not give much importance to these differences; he believes that forming a committee to decide on election seats is the beginning of the process of unity. He said that the understanding on election seats is a kind of election agreement, and that it can have only limited results. Major achievements will result when there is unity on policies and programs.

Mr. Ajit Singh believes that even when the Janata Dal (A) and the Janata Dal (B) run for elections separately, they are no weaker than any other party. Their unity will make them strong and enable them to form a government if they work together. He said that the Janata Dal (A) has no objection to cooperating with the Samajwadi Party. Mr. Mulayam Singh is a member of the Lokdal family. However, Mulayam Singh must first talk about unity in front of the people. Saying something different outside than what is said in private will not help. It will not be difficult to find a way if the Samajwadi Party talks honestly. The language that Mulayam Singh is using is only helping the BJP.

* V.P. Singh Renews Mandal Reservation Demands

94AS0007A Varanasi AJ in Hindi 23 Sep 93 p 7

[News Report: "V.P. Singh Touts Mandal Commission for Votes"]

[Text] Narayanpur (Mirzapur), 22 September—V.P. Singh, the former prime minister, said that it will not be a Hindu but a Mandal government in our country now, and that more and more backward castes will be able to participate in government through the quota system.

Mr. V. P. Singh was addressing a public rally at the Nav Jyoti Higher Secondary School in Gadauri this afternoon. He said that even after the Mandal Commission announcement, the BJP and the Congress Party have closed their doors. We have to open these doors. He said that it was decided before the Mandal Commission's recommendations were implemented that the backward classes would get 27 percent, and that the unscheduled castes would get 15 percent, of the IAS positions. The weavers and other backward castes are also included in the quota.

Mr. Singh asked high caste people why they threw rocks at him, suggesting that they instead throw rocks at the BJP and Congress people. He said that he was asking 10 percent reservations for higher caste people on economic criteria. He blamed the BJP for having Hindus and Muslims fight with each other. People of both these religions have been partners in getting independence and helping the country make progress.

Mentioning price increases, he said that prices of diesel, fertilizers, water, and electricity have increased. "During my government, I did not allow increases of even one paisa in these commodities." He declared that the next president of India would be from a backward caste, and that after the Janata Dal government is formed, all debts of the lower and backward castes would be pardoned. He asked the backward caste people to have all their children receive more education. Finally, he appealed to all to help the Janata Dal candidates win the next Vidhan Sabha election.

In addition, Mr. Yadunath Singh, Rajendra Prasad Singh, Harikewal Prasad Kushvaha, Revati Raman Singh, Wasim Ahmed, and Sharad Yadav also addressed the Mandal rally. The people were a little disappointed that Laluprasad Yadav, the Bihar chief minister, failed to attend the rally. The rally was chaired by Harikewal Prasad. The master of ceremonies was Bajrangi Singh. The organizer of the program was Prem Chander Singh. Mr. Prem Singh, the district Janata Dal president; Lalchand Mauryia; and Mrs. Meera Singh were present at the rally, among other leaders.

Welcome doors were erected at Chhota Mirzapur, Narayanpur, Sikiya, Dendua, Waradi, Khajurol, and Atalhat in honor of the former prime minister. About 25,000 people sat patiently under the hot sun for three hours to listen to the speeches. At this time, Mr. Shridhar Tiwari, a BJP leader from Chonar, resigned from the BJP to join the Janata Dal.

While addressing another public meeting at Roberts Ganj (Sonbhadar), the former prime minister said that the former government has ignored the Kamur area. "There are neither hospitals nor educational institutions here. Now the Mandal government will emerge soon. The backward people will never have to spread their hands in front of everyone. Even though the BJP and the Congress (I) oppose the Mandal Commission, they will not be able to succeed in their efforts." He encouraged the people to vote for the Janata Dal in the next election. This meeting was chaired by Harikewal Kushvaha and organized by Rajinder Singh. It was also addressed by Sharad Yadav, Revati Raman Singh, Bihar Minister Girivar Panday, and Chandra Shekhar Singh.

Mr. V. P. Singh arrived six hours later than the appointed time. The RSS workers raised slogans before V. P. Singh arrived. The police removed the demonstrators.

* Chandra Shekhar Still Hoping For Janata Dal Unity

94AS0008A New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 23 Sep 93 p 10

[Article by Dinkar Shukal: "Chandra Shekhar Assured Unity Will Be Permanent"]

[Text] Aligarh, 22 September—Former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar has expressed hope that the proposed merger of his Janata Party (S), the Janata Dal, and the Janata Dal (A) will be permanent. One reason for this is because this is not an election coalition, but an attempt at unity and to fight the BJP's communal practices, and a response to the serious challenge of corruption and maladministration in the Congress government. Second, these parties have learned from their failures in 1967, 1977, and 1988. The leaders of these three parties will act intelligently this time, and there is not reason for this unity not to last. While answering questions from newspaper men in the village of Hamidpur, in the Tappalka Development Block near Aligarh, he said that people are expressing doubts about the possible unity of the Janata Dal and its former detracting parties. Of course, no guarantee can be given of a permanent coalition; however, there is no problem under the present circumstances, and there is no argument about who will be the leader. The most important thing is that the Janata Party came into existence because of the original political and economic issues in 1977. Now they are trying to unite, making these same issues their basis.

He said directly that "these efforts for unity do not mean that we are starting a campaign against the Congress or the BJP." Actually, this unity is against the tendency of the BJP to divide the country over religion and the Congress Party pushing our country toward economic slavery under the guise of economic liberalization.

Mr. Chandra Shekhar said that the BJP has started a dangerous game. The party was condemned from all sides during the last election for making Ram Janambhumi an election issue. Its leaders at the time hinted that the party would not make religion an issue in the future. For the last 15-20 days, however, it has been observed that it was determined to make Ayodhya an issue in the four states where elections will be held within the next two months. This is deplorable, because our country is facing serious problems such as poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy. The Hindu religion was not endangered during the last thousand years, and the same is true for the future.

He ridiculed P. V. Narasimha Rao while answering a question, and said the government that cannot even protect the Babri Masjid is deluding itself by talking about rebuilding it. He said that all opposition parties should understand that the temple-mosque question does not stand before our nation anymore. The Janata Party (S) leader, while addressing a crowd of villagers and farmers who had gathered in the hot noon sun, said while discussing the Dunkel Proposal, that it should be understood that the foreign agencies will have the right to inspect the new kind of seeds that our new agricultural scientists have developed. This means that these agencies will start interfering in every village and home.

Mr. Nagender Singh, the Janata Dal (S) organizer of the meeting, presented a one lakh rupee gift to Chandra Shekhar at this time. The meeting was also addressed by Satya Prakash Malaviya, U. P. president of the Janata Dal (S); Dr. Sanjay Singh, working committee president, and Rajilal Suman, general secretary of the party.

* Unity of Janata Dal Factions Seen in Doubt

94AS000C New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 25 Sep 93 p 2

[Article: "Samajwadi Party Will Never Join Janata Dal—Mulayam Singh"]

[Text] Lucknow, 24 September—Mulayam Singh Yadav and his Samajwadi Party once again foiled the Janata Dal family's fresh efforts at unity. In the Lucknow rally of the Samajwadi Party, they ended all their unity efforts and condemned Imam Abdullah Bukhari for creating problems for the Muslims. They appealed to Muslims at the rally, claiming that the Jamma Masjid tried to break them up two or three days ago. They advised the Muslims not to be fooled by them. The efforts by the Jamma Masjid to unite Muslims were described at the rally as "a campaign to hurt the Muslims." Mulayam Singh said openly that his party would neither unite nor form coalitions with any other party. Referring to the new effort by the Jamma Masjid, he said, "The religious leaders should worry about their religion. We, the Hindus, will fight the Muslims' war." Mulayam Singh also took the Muslim leadership and the Left Wing parties to task for trying to attain unity. In support of his decision to not unite with other parties, Mulayam Singh asked the crowd that gathered at his meeting to raise their hands and put a seal on his decision.

This powerful rally in Lucknow gave strength to Mulayam Singh today. He was waiting for this rally to express his opinion about unity. This rally proved to be a powerful barometer for him. Seeing the huge crowd at the rally, Mulayam Singh and the central leadership of the state party began to express their anger against Imam Bukhari and the left wing parties. The state party chief, Ram

Sharan Das, said that the Janata Dal is a group of "handicapped" parties. "All the workers and the people are with us. We do not care for them. The news media are giving a lot of coverage to V. P. Singh. Janeshwar Misra, the national vice president of the party, expressed his concern over the intelligence of people who sit in the mosque and try to make V. P. Singh and Mulayam Singh friends.

He said, "Those who sit in the mosque should ask themselves, 'Who saved the Babri Masjid? Was it V. P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, Ajit Singh, or Mulayam Singh?' One of them saved the Babri Masjid, and the rest just pulled your legs. Do you want their friendship? How is that possible?" He hinted toward Imam Bukhari and said, "Do not try to teach me about votes while sitting in the mosque. The votes in our country will not be controlled by religion."

The General Secretary of the party, Azam Khan, was even more aggressive against Imam Bukhari's recent efforts. He appealed to the Muslims not to be taken in by the conspiracy started in Jamma Masjid two or three days ago. This campaign, according to him, was started to hurt the Muslims. "You should make a decision according to the facts, and not what Delhi tells you." Kapil Dev Singh, the other party general secretary, clearly said that no agreement would be made under anyone's pressure now. "We have joined forces with Kanshi Ram only, and we will keep our unity with him." Raghu Thakur, the first general secretary of the party, took shots mainly at V. P. Singh. He claimed, "The talk about unity of three parties is analogous to marrying the dead. This unity is just being staged for the election. The coalition of V. P. Singh, Ajit Singh, and Chandra Shekhar is nothing compared to our own coalition. This huge crowd supports this statement."

The opinions of all the leaders at this rally were clear on the question of unity. Mulayam Singh has asked the people involved in uniting the parties to wait until this rally was held. Recently, some Muslim leaders tried again to unite the parties, and Mulayam Singh told them also that he would give his decision after this rally. Mulayam Singh gave his decision so that the people attending the rally did not return with doubts in their mind. Kanshi Ram also attended the rally. Both leaders expressed their opinions about unity on the same stage. Kanshi Ram cleared all the rumors and said, "I will have nothing to do with the Congress (I); I never have, and I never will." He continued, "V. P. Singh is standing beside the BJP. He is giving so much strength to the BJP now that the question of a coalition does not arise."

This rally, which was very important to the prestige of the Samajwadi Party, was against communalism. However, all speakers focused on attacking V. P. Singh, the Janata Dal, and their efforts to unite the parties. Kiranmay Nanda, Samajwadi leader and fishery minister in West Bengal, said, "What Janata Dal family? They marry and divorce every day and still think they have a happy family. We do not want to join that family again." Mulayam Singh Yadav spoke for about an hour. He said, "We do not have any problems. The BJP does not have any problems either. The battle is between us both; however, some people want to spread problems here." Referring to the left wing parties, Mulayam Singh said, "I want to beg of those who are trying to unite us that they are trying to break up the people. The policy for elections has been determined by today's rally. I have started this campaign. You should not be complacent now." He argued that they formed coalitions in 1977 and again in 1989. "And what did we get from it? Now they are saying that Mulayam Singh will become the chief minister. However, the man we made prime minister in 1989 tried his best to conspire to prevent me from becoming chief minister." Mulayam Singh informed the Muslims about the meeting held in Jamma Masjid and told them that their fight would not be fought by the Muslim leadership.

In this rally, Mohan Prakash, former national chairman of the Youth Janata Dal Party, announced his decision to join the Samajwadi Party. Mohan Prakash, in addition to being the national chairman of the Youth Lokdal, was also president of the BHU student union. He is considered to be one of the sharpest young leaders in the state. He said, "V. P. Singh is talking about unity, not because of some principle, but because of fear." Right there, Mr. Janeshwar Misra called V. P. Singh's "Mandal government" a total fraud. He argued, "V. P. Singh has announced making a harijan president or prime minister. He pushes Ramvilas Paswan to the front when he says that. Why does not V. P. Singh announce making Kanshi Ram prime minister?" They said that big landlords used to brag by giving all their land to their sharecroppers; Ramvilas Paswan was thus nothing more than a plough hand to V. P. Singh. Therefore, in order to keep the power to himself, he presented him as the candidate for various positions.

Azam Khan said that V. P. and the BJP were both equally dangerous. He added, "The issue is not one of a mosque. If the BJP comes to power, then worship in mosques will stop. We will not hear prayer calls from any mosque. The Muslims will not be allowed to grow beards. Backward castes and minorities will not have the right to live here either." Among the others who spoke at the rally were Rao Virender Singh from Haryana, Thumpan Thomas from Kerala, Kalpana Jain, Beni Prasad Verma, Rama Shanker Kaushik, Shatrud Prakash, and Balram Yadav.

* Driving Forces Behind Janata Reunification Viewed

94AS0041D Varanasi AJ in Hindi 29 Sep 93 p 12

[Article by Sukant Chatterji: "This is Not Homecoming"]

[Text] The reunification of the Janata Dal, Janata Dal (A), and the Samajwadi Janata Party has signaled changes in the political atmosphere in the Hindi-speaking states. Its direct effect will be on Uttar Pradesh, some regions across the state line, Rajasthan, and Delhi. The Janata Dal, formed about five years ago, which had disintegrated into four major parties during the last three years, is moving toward unity again. However, Mulayam Singh Yadav, who is emerging as the possible future chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, and his Samajwadi Party are not part of this reunification.

Janata Dal leader V.P. Singh came to power in 1989 with the support of the BJP and left-wing parties. The V.P.

Singh government had fallen when the BJP took back its support over the Ayodhya question. In 1990, Chandra Shekhar had broken relations with the Janata Dal and formed Samajwadi Janata Party and became prime minister for four months with just 54 legislators of his party and support of the Congress (I) Party. In Uttar Pradesh, Mulayam Singh also left the Janata Dal and joined the Samajwadi Party. He became the chief minister there with the support of Congress (I).

Ajit Singh again broke up Janata Dal in August 1992. He did not agree with the Janata Dal over its philosophy. Ajit Singh always had his own ideas about implementing Mandal Commission's recommendations which has been the main political goal of the Janata Dal.

Finally, the political affairs committee of the Janata Dal confirmed reunification of the Samajwadi Party and the Janata Dal (A). The decision for the merger was already made and all that was left was confirmation by this committee. The reason for this unity is to defeat the communal politics practiced by the BJP. The Janata Dal leadership believes that the unified Janata Dal working with the left-wing parties will emerge as a third power to counter the BJP and the Congress (I), and will strengthen the democratic and secular forces. The Janata Dal President Bommai called this merger a historic need and identified it as homecoming' of the Janata Dal (A) and the Samajwadi Janata Party. This formality of the Janata Dal reunification will be complete by 11 October. Before it, on 29-30 September, the leaders of three factions will meet in Gaziabad. All top leaders including Chandra Shekhar, V.P. Singh, Ajit Singh, and S.R. Bommai will participate in it.

Representatives of the three parties will discuss details of the merger before this meeting. They have nominated Ramakarishna Hegde and Sharad Yadav from the Janata Dal, Rashid Massaud and Sunil Shastri from the Janata Dal (A), and Om Prakash Chautala and Yashwant Singh Sinha from the Samajwadi Janata Party to this committee.

It is believed that no important changes in the organizational structure of the united Janata Dal will be made now. They will just include the leaders from the Janata Dal (A) and the Samajwadi Party in some committees.

In spite of this all, V.P. Singh, Ajit Singh and other leaders have expressed the belief that agreement with the Samajwadi Party will take place soon before the elections. They do not give more details for this expectation. They are just optimist. Mr. V.P. Singh is willing to accept Mulayam Singh as the next chief minister of the state.

Political observers believe that the reunification of the Janata Dal family will provide it better opportunity in the vidhan sabha elections that will be held in four states. It will cause problems for Mulayam Singh if the Samajwadi Party does not join it. The Janata Dal unity will hurt the backward classes and Muslim vote bank. We cannot deny the possibility that Mulayam Singh's negative attitude proving disastrous for him in this effort by the anti-communal forces, and isolating the Samajwadi Party during the elections.

The political future of Uttar Pradesh is unclear in this scenario. So far the BJP is the only major party there. The Congress (I) has all but lost its support, and the possibility is that the BJP will have a direct match with the Janata Dal and the Samajwadi Party. If the coalition of the Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party does not make an election agreement with the unified Janata Dal, the purpose of the unity will be only half fulfilled.

The union of Janata Dal with Janata Dal (A) will benefit in Rajasthan. Ajit Singh has a lot of influence in some regions of this state. It is possible that in the Congress (I)-BJP confrontation the janata Dal will indirectly support the Congress (I) in order to defeat the BJP. A similar political environment might be created in Delhi also. In the remaining two states—Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh—the unified Janata Dal does not have much influence. Mulayam Singh is not yet prepared for the unity of various factions of the Janata Dal. Mulayam Singh is quiet angry at V.P. Singh. Mulayam Singh says that he should not take the full credit for opposing the BJP and communal forces while he was the chief minister. The chariot trip of BJP leader Lal Karishna Advani was stopped in Bihar. It was him (Mulayam) who had raised the anti-communal flag. Mulayam Singh is angry at the fact that when V.P. Singh was the prime minister, all conspiracies were hatched against him at his house with V.P. Singh's approval. That is why the Samajwadi Party and the Janata dal family cannot agree.

It will be the Samajwadi Janata Party under the leadership of Chandra Shekhar that will benefit most from the unity of the Janata family. The truth is that the Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP) has not been successful anywhere except in Haryana. Many of the SJP cabinet members and leaders have left this party. Only Chandra Shekhar and Devgauda are members of the Lok Sabha.

The unity of the Janata Dal family and its coalition with the left-wing parties will emerge as a powerful political force in two Hindi-speaking states, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. However, the causes of disagreement are still there. Thus, the permanence of this unity just does not appear to be possible.

* Janata Dal Reunification Viewed

94AS0040E New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 30 Sep 93 p 10

[Article by Om Prakash: "Assembly of Mavericks in Janata Dal"]

[Text] Gaziabad, 29 September. Ajit Singh paces in one room. When he comes out, he smiles at everyone and says, "Brother Som Pal, I am leaving that to you." In the Janata Family, Ajit Singh and Som Pal are two opposite ends of an axis. How does U.P.'s Janata Dal President Harikewal Prasad feel about this unity? Says Som Pal, "Just like a new marriage." Everyone in the room roars with laughter. This is the atmosphere in room number 406 in Mela Plaza Hotel. At that time, in the adjoining room Chandra Shekhar and Ajit Singh were negotiating with V.P. Singh over the distribution of party positions. More laughter is

heard in the corridor. People cannot understand what the word merger' means. The word merger' does not mean dissolution; it mean unity. This comment was made before the formal announcement about the merger but after the formal meeting was over.

The top leaders of the Janata Dal family had met first time today after November 1990. The Atmosphere in Hotel Mela Plaza was like a mela [festive]. From among the top leaders, Ajit Singh arrived there first this morning. He was also the happiest person today. He was in the role of Devi Lal Tau, but did feel the limelight. He stayed close to Chandra Shekhar. Chandra Shekhar met almost with everyone. He met with V.P. Singh alone several times. The results of the meeting began to filter outside even before noon. The fact was that the talks about unity was not getting people excited. The war strategy for self-defense does not win castles.

News of Ramvilas Paswan's starting arguments filtered from inside. There will be no unity without some principles. The Dalits and backward classes must have at least 60 percent share in the party. Ajit also argued hard. He says that it must be decided first who will have what position in the party. It would be useless to decide on it after the elections. Lalu called Mulayam [demon] Ravana. Satya Prakash Maulviya attacked Mulayam's conceit. Jayapal Reddy says that since we are strong we should not repeatedly talk about uniting with Mulayam. That would make us look weak. V.P. Singh replies that Muslim brothers and other secular people want us to unite and we must keep these options open. Later, someone said, we do not have the time for all this. The question of holding a merger meeting on 11 October does not arise now. Everything must be done quickly. Names for elections have to be picked on 6 October. In other words, the Janata Dal had to move fast.

At lunch Hegde takes the lighted corner seat in Rang Tarang restaurant. Hegde is a strong supporter of reunification. He enjoys every word he says when he talks about unity. He hopes that people will trust the party and [the party] will not repeat the mistakes of the past. Ajit Singh makes fun of everyone and says that only Bommai will talk to the press in the evening. No one else was to say anything. Some prudence was practiced and a couple of accidents also occurred. After the first level meeting, V.P. Singh was away from the place where pictures were being taken. He was called outside when people demanded to see him. Chandra Shekhar had earlier asked the he be photographed with the two top leaders—Devi lal and Biju Patnayak. He had hinted to leave V.P. Singh out. When V.P. Singh moved forward to be photographed, there was total silence. However, as if there was an explosion when he arrived there. All workers raised a loud "Long live V.P. Singh." When Chandra Shekhar left the hotel in the evening, the slogan "Long live V.P. Singh" was raised for his benefit.

Almost everyone agreed that this merger will be beneficial. If we believe Satya Pal Yadav, a third power emerges whenever the nation is in danger. This power unites the nation. He said that this was a historic moment. Jaypal Reddy said that Ashok Singh hates Advani more than he hates V.P. Singh. However, he has political constraints. People unite when there are political necessities. The credibility of our unity is not less than any other group. One faction of the Janata Dal (B) repeatedly said that the Janata Dal (B) was being robbed. Those who have nothing, not even principles or character, have come here to become partner in Janata Dal capital. They have come here to become leaders. This faction was puzzled and did not understand why the weight of egos was being forced on their shoulder.

* Janata Dal Seen United in Name Only

94AS0041A New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 30 Sep 93 p 1

[Article: "Unified Party's Flag Bears Janata Dal Name"]

[Text] Gaziabad, 29 September—Janata Dal's three factions—Janata Dal (B), Janata Dal (A), and the Samajwadi Party have agreed on principle for unity today. They have decided to adopt the Janata Dal name, symbol, flag and by-laws. However, the formal announcement was not made because of disagreement over the distribution of positions. A committee of five members to resolve organizational issue was formed. Biju Patnayak, Lalu Prasad Yadav, Ram Vilas Paswan, Rashid Massaud, and Om Prakash Chautala are the members of this committee. This committee will present its opinion by tomorrow or the day after that and the formal announcement of the merger will be made after that. These uniting parties have also kept the door open for talks with Mulayam Singh. Lalu Prasad Yadav has been authorized to talk with him. The party members agreed with former Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal that the people can recall the representatives who do not do their work. Devi Lal had demanded that during the 1975 campaign also.

In this three-party meeting, while the leaders and workers had hoped that the third power would emerge today, there were some Janata Dal leaders who believed that this was a new game to undo all the work they have done. In today's meeting, two former prime ministers, V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar; former Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal; two former chief ministers, Om Prakash Chautala and Ram Karishna Hegde; Bihar's Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav; and Orissa's Chief Minister Biju Patnayak took part. In this meeting about 60 leaders of the three factions were present. These included: S. R. Reddy, Sharad Yadav, Mufti Mohammed Sayyed, Ramvilas Paswan, Ajit Singh, Rashid Massaud, Satya Prakash Maulviya, Yashwant Sinha, Digvijay Singh, Harikewal Prasad, and Jaipal Reddy.

In this meeting, speaker after speaker emphasized the importance of the unity of Janata Dal family to fight factionalism. It would emerge as the third power along with other left-wing parties, and this third power is the one that can give the right direction to our nation. The members of all three factions believe that Narasimha Rao's Congress and the BJP have a secret agreement to help each other. The three factions believe that by defeating the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, it can be knocked out from the whole nation. These leaders believe that if Mulayam Singh Yadav joins them then it would be easy to destroy the BJP right in Uttar Pradesh. It was also said he is working under some illusion.

This unity meeting started today at the Mela Plaza Hotel with the semblance of forgetting the past' on the surface, but there was a war going on over the distribution of various important positions behind the scenes. There was a quick agreement over keeping the name, symbol, and bye-laws of the Janata Dal, however, the old opinions began to rise in the meeting immediately after that. Ajit Singh argued that the party could not function without a constitutional structure. Ajit Singh's earlier disagreement was also over the organizational structure. He said that innumerable branches of the BJP and the RSS were in operation and if the Janata Dal failed to establish even one structural unit then it would be difficult to fight them. He said that the announcement of the merger should be made after the structure of the party has been decided upon. One of the party factions considered this his shrewdness at work. They believed that he was using this as a prelude to get himself a high position in the party structure. According to our sources, Ajit Singh has made it clear that his Jat supporters will follow him only if he has a major position in the party. Because of Ajit Singh's pressure to establish the structure of the party, the announcement of the merger had to be postponed.

Lalu Yadav demanded that the party should have a practical viewpoint instead of a philosophical. Actually, Lalu's role in this unity effort is the same as of Devi Lal in 1989. There is a link between Biju, Lalu, Ajit, Hegde, Sharad Yadav, and Chandra Shekhar. The reason for this is their idea to form a panchayati [village council] leadership to replace V.P. Singh. This camp argues that V.P. Singh is hated by the high caste people, and giving him importance reduced party's all-round support. Lalu also made entry into the Uttar Pradesh election propaganda a reason for it. After talking with Mulayam Singh, he would be able to tell the Yadav voters that he had no alternative but to work against Mulayam Singh. He said in the meeting that Mulayam Singh has become another Ravana, who is not listening to his own people.

Hegde, Biju, and company emphasized becoming the third power. Chandra Shekhar, while stressing the importance of uniting against the BJP, said that the party organization should have representatives of every group. The party should not belong to one group. He supported the idea of softening V.P. Singh's "60 percent principle." Ram Vilas Paswan, who was pushed aside in the beginning of this unity effort, strongly demanded that the backward castes and tribes should have 60 percent positions in the party. Mr. Paswan's proposal resulted in a lengthy debate. Later, it was agreed that the organization of the united party should not be a showcase for well-known names only. It was agreed that the party organization should have representation from people from all walks of life. It was hinted that Mr. Paswan's name was included in the list of organization member after this debate.

S. R. Bommai told the news reporters later that the recommendations made the unity committee have been approved. He said that the three factions have united into one party now, and the technical aspects of this merger will be worked out later. He added that they were uniting and that increased their credibility. He expressed hope that the people will believe in Janata Dal family's unity. He said that all parties have disagreements, and the same people foster unity later. Therefore, there is no reason not to trust the merger.

* Janata Dal Unity Seen Ephemeral, Unlikely to Last

94AS0047F Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 3 Oct 93 p 8

[Article by M.J. Akbar: "Inside An Amoeba"]

[Text] In the dysfunctional world of politics one can ask how much is two plus two. Or to frame the question in slightly different manner, can an amoeba he called a logical, whole unit.

These two queries are not as unrelated as they might appear at first glance, though of course their conjunction is unusual. But given the subject being addressed it is the unusual which is the usual. We are talking about the proliferating varieties of that political species known as the Janata Dal. Its periodic propensity to unite is a habit matched only by its urge to split as soon as this facade has served its immediate purpose.

The political picture of last week was the group photograph of an array of bitter enemies, from Messrs Ajit Singh to V.P. Singh to Laloo Prasad Yadav to Sharad Yadav to Chandra Shekhar, standing on the balcony of a hotel room outside New Delhi waving to the world through the lens of photographers, each one wearing a largish smile. Even Mr Devi Lal was alleged to have smiled. Mr V.P. Singh and Mr Chandra Shekhar were once glimpsed actually holding hands though it must have been beyond them to repeat the symbolic gesture.

It should be asked why they were gathered in a hotel room outside Delhi rather than in one of the spacious bungalows which most of them have the privilege of living in. This is because the chief dramatist of this group, Mr V.P. Singh, has resolved he will not set foot in Delhi until a boy of the backward castes is able to get a job through the Union public service commission on the basis of the Mandal commission's rules. So Mr Singh will hover on the edges of Delhi, he will come to within a foot of the borders of the capital of India. He will not enter this vile land of upper caste power.

His party is a little stumped by the fact elections have been announced even for Delhi and if Mr Singh does not enter the city he will not be able to campaign here. So they are developing a strategic gameplan. Mr Singh will come to the edge of the city. All the microphones will be turned towards the audience sitting in Delhi, while Mr Singh addresses them. What clowns.

This takes us to an obvious question. What are they smiling about?

Those among us in the normal world of voters may have something to smile about. Who, after all, would not smile at a joint photograph that includes Mr Singh and Mr Om Pradkash Chautala. Just the other day in the Lok Sabha, Mr Sharad Yadav still furious at having lost his cabinet

membership thanks to the split in the Janata government in 1990, lashing out at Mr Chandra Shekhar calling the former prime minister abusive names which even some Janata Dal members of parliament condemned as petty, personal and pathetic.

Of course mutual hatred is no reason for not belonging to the same political party. Otherwise no political party would exist. After all, the more senior India's leaders get the more intense becomes their hatred. The stakes get higher, you see. At junior levels they stab each other with stilettoes to become ministers of state. When they grow old and wise they slit one another's throats—to become prime ministers.

But the problem in the Janata Dal configuration is not ordinary murderous hatred. It is the fact they destroyed one another, even preferring suicide to cooperation. There is no reason why anyone should believe it will not happen again.

Certainly Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav believes it will happen again. This conviction is leading him towards very unfamiliar territory. The old Lohiaite sounds far more sympathetic towards the Congress than any of his associates would ever have imagined. It is evident now that his reluctance to enter an alliance with the Chandra Shekhar-V.P. Singh Janata Dal is not just the posturing that normally accompanies deal making at this stage of the game. His reservations are far deeper and have to do with perceptions of betrayal. He simply cannot get himself to trust Messrs V.P. Singh and Ajit Singh.

After the 1989 defeat of the Congress, Mr Yadav assumed that while the V.P. and Ajit Singhs would share out the spoils in Delhi they would leave Uttar Pradesh to him. The state wsa his fief and he did not want any challenge on this turf. As it is, it had not been very easy for him to swallow the fact Mr V.P. Singh had become the supreme leader of the opposition.

Mr Yadav's wounds from the long battle he had conducted against Mr V.P. Singh when the latter was chief minister of Uttar Pradesh in the early Eighties had still not healed. He had not nursed his wounds. He had only nursed his grievances. Then he saw the same Mr V.P. Singh who had ordered a spate of police "encounters" against backward caste members in the name of anti-dacoity operations graduate to messiah status among the Yadavs. Thereby interfering with Mr Yadav's own electoral constituency.

He could have handled this had Mr V.P. Singh not begun to deny Mr Yadav any space at all. After the assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh were won by the Janata Dal in 1990, he thought himself the unanimous choice for chief minister. But Mr Ajit Singh, already Union industries minister, with blatant help from Mr V.P. Singh suddenly put up in Lucknow a contest in the legislature party. Though Mr Yadav won the contest, he never forgave his opponents.

He is naturally worried about a repetition of the same game. Mr V.P. Singh proved to be problematic when the left tried to broker an agreement between Mr Yadav and the Janata Dal. The Mandal messiah had offered a solution with his declaration never to hold office again. But the sceptical Mr Yadav was not persuaded, for he had witnessed Mr V.P. Singh's renunciation and resignation acts too often before.

Mr Chandra Shekhar, always close to Mr Yadav, stepped in. A non-Congress Janata alliance against the Bharatiya Janata Party in Uttar Pradesh was necessary, and Mr Chandra Shekhar only had to offer the guarantees he thought Mr Yadav would want. It was mainly the assurance that Mr V.P. Singh was no longer the principal controller of veto powers. In fact, Mr Chandra Shekhar hinted that after the reunion of the Janata factions Mr Ajit Singh would be running the show, not Mr V.P. Singh. Moreover, Mr Chandra Shekhar offered Mr Yadav an overwhelming percentage of seats in the prospective alliance.

But Mr Yadav began demanding the head of Mr Ajit Singh too and the asking rate being too high, there was no agreement much to the relief of the BJP.

The story indicates the depths of suspicion and dislike involved in Janata politics of two decades. It was in 1973 that Jayaprakash Narayan's anti-corruption crusade caught fire, eventually giving birth to the Janata government. Apart from Mr Morarji Desai the membership remains more or less the same, with some additions from Congress ranks like Mr V.P. Singh and Mr Mufti Mohammed Sayeed. It is a pity that the politics is also the same.

The logical follow up would be to ask why voters should trust these politicians not to repeat past disasters. The BJP is quite convinced about the answer and therefore has now decided its future lies in single path politics rather than alliances. Mr Yadav, however, believes an alliance with the old lot would be meaningless, unworkable and even counterproductive. Hence a partnership with Mr Kanshi Ram and his Harijan following. Mr Yadav will deliver the Muslims and backwards while Mr Kanshi Ram delivers the Harijans.

Politics never works miracles. The culture of negativism and depressing disillusionment with political parties breed confusion and indifference, producing strange effects. There is a growing perception that the BJP vote has plateaued or even declined over the last few months. This could well be true and yet leave the BJP unaffected electorally. Even if the BJP polled only 28 per cent of the Uttar Pradesh vote, it still could be as comfortably off as in 1991 when it bagged more than 30 per cent with a split in the rest of the votes. We have, after all, not proportional representation but a first past the poll system.

Mr Yadav's game plan is to emerge the largest non-BJP bloc in the Uttar Pradesh assembly while ensuring the BJP does not achieve a simple majority on its own. He would then bully the other parties into supporting his claim to chief ministership on the plea that anything else would create a BJP government. Theoretically this is fine. Practical life is somewhat different. And that is the difference the BJP has invested in.

With these unity shenanigans continuing, the Congress sends out desperate messages to "former Congressmen" to come to the aid of the party at this great hour of crisis. Incidentally, this crisis is a creation of the Congress itself. The circumstances fetch a contented I told you so smile on the face of one individual—Mr Lal Krishna Advani.

* Shahi Imam giving Fatwah To Vote For Janata Dal

94AS0055B Varanasi AJ in Hindi 8 Oct 93 p 3

[Article: "Shahi Imam Will Issue Fatwah in Favor of V.P. Singh"]

[Text] New Delhi, 7 October. There is a strong possibility that an announcement from the Jama Masjid endorsing V.P. Singh and his Janata Party for the upcoming election will be made soon. Shahi Imam Abdullah Bukhari was to announce his fatwah [decree] today, however, this was postponed while waiting for the results of the last ditch efforts by Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav to convince Mulayam Singh for an agreement in Lucknow.

The Shahi Imam had especially invited more than 250 Muslim representatives from Uttar Pradesh for a meeting today. Strict attitude was adopted toward BSP leader Kanshi Ram declaring him a BJP agent and, at the same time while discussing unity, Mulayam Singh's vain nature was blamed for the failure of unity efforts. The whole meeting clearly was leaning toward supporting V.P. Singh.

During the meeting, regional committees were formed for every vidhan sabha district in Uttar Pradesh. These committees will present their reports after collecting and analyzing facts. All this work will be done between one week and fifteen days. The Imam will announce his decision after that.

In the context of efforts for unity started from the Jama Masjid, details of all the talks held with Mulayam Singh and V.P. Singh were presented at the meeting. Legislator Bhim Afzal gave a summary of his one-hour talk with Kanshi Ram. Everyone cursed Kanshi Ram's stubborn attitude profusely and finally declared him a BJP agent. V.P. Singh's role in this whole campaign was declared to be very positive in this meeting and several speakers praised him.

The 27 September letter from Mulayam Singh has affected Shahi Imam's speech today. He said that he was not talking about Muslims unity. He said that he disagreed with anyone who talked about it. He emphasized that he was talking about the unity of all backward classes.

The Imam criticized some of Mulayam Singh's comments. He said that he was not vengeful in nature. "I read newspapers. He said this about me and another person said that about me. I accept all that just like I accept a nosegay."

The Imam repeated his warning again today that if the votes of the Dalits and backward groups were divided then a party that wants to break up this nation will come to power in Uttar Pradesh. He said that all factions of the Janata Dal must unite for the sake of the nation.

Legislator Bhim Afzal while commenting on the case against the BJP and the Shiv Sena about their involvement in the Ayodhya incident said that "TADA" rules must be imposed on these 40 miscreants. He said that the prime minister should act on it even when he is even a little serious about this issue. While calling the prime minister a hundred percent BJP agent, Mr. Afzal said that Mr. Rao has made all arrangements to transfer power to the BJP. He said that it was true that the BJP will benefit in the election if its top leaders were arrested. This Muslims of this country want to see how serious the prime minister is about this issue.

* Leadership Struggle Seen Continuing Liability for Janata Dal

94AS0058A New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 18 Oct 93 p 5

[Article by Om Prakash: "Janata Dal Also Has this Problem Facing Them: Who Will be Their Leader?"]

[Text] New Delhi, 17 October. The politics of the Janata Dal and other parties espousing social justice is focused on one point now—Who will be their leader in the future and under which policy will the polarization take place? Both the Janata Dal and the Congress (I)—the middle-of-way—parties are facing this dilemma. This problem has encompassed the BJP and left-wing parties also. The left-wing parties are wondering how they will fit with the Janata Dal and are hesitating in deciding on their path of action. The politics of Congress (I) and Janata have affected the BJP at the same time. First, the discipline of the party was affected over the distribution of election tickets, and many party followers adopted the Bahujan Samaj Party's (BSP) slogan in Uttar Pradesh. The BSP slogan was, "Your forming a government with our vote will not work." A similar slogan is being raised in the BJP also, however, it is being raised by high caste people!

V.P. Singh believes that the polarization of social forces will occur according to the election results. If the Janata Dal emerges victorious after this election then forces for social justice will attract a large faction of the Congress (I) to it. Almost the whole leadership of the Janata Dal subscribes to the belief that after this election and before the Lok Sabha election, the Congress (I) will break up. V.P. Singh goes as far as to say that the social justice forces that are with the BJP now will also leave it sooner or later. Chandra Shekhar also thinks that the Congress (I) will break up even though the process of this break up may start in a small village in a distant part of India instead of in Delhi. All other Janata Dal leaders including Ajit Singh agree with this.

However, the biggest worry for the Janata Dal is: What will happen to it in Delhi and Rajasthan after the election? The party leaders believe that their party will not get a majority vote in these two states. In this situation, it will have to endorse the Congress (I) in order to make sure that the BJP does not form the government. This will end its anti-Congress (I) plans. Many socialist leaders cannot even think about it. An even bigger worry for the Janata Dal is that the Congress (I) might repeat a Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav kind of strategy. The Janata Dal will weaken in a

polarization that might occur after it. This was discussed in the top leaders meeting and it was decided to pick candidates for these two states with great care. However, all this was forgotten later in the struggle to get tickets for people belonging to their groups.

The biggest reason for Janata Dal's being in trouble is Arjun Singh. The minorities, Dalits, and backward classes have always pitted their hopes on him. He also played a role in stopping major polarization against the BJP and the Congress (I). He causes major problems for V.P. Singh. In case of a change in Congress (I) leadership or Arjun Singh's rebellion, it would be very difficult for V.P. Singh to keep his supporters united.

The Janata Dal is still fighting the war within its own ranks. This war hovers around both policies and personalities. Biju Patnayak is Janata Dal's proposed chief minister, however, his faith in Mandal is marginal. In Karnataka, Ramakrishan Hegde and Devgauda are the leaders. Both are of high caste and fighting war for the backward classes in Delhi. The Janata Dal is trying to get out of this image of contradiction. Especially, since the leadership of the party believes that their party must reflect the society as a whole. They do not want to give preference to caste in the party. The Janata Dal is espousing 10 percent reservations for the high caste persons. Another former member of this party has also started a campaign to recruit Brahmans into his party.

The confrontation with the emerging leadership of the party is over ideology with V.P. Singh and over strategy with Sharad Yadav and Lalu Prasad Yadav. V.P. Singh wants Mandal recommendations adopted through democratic process. The party itself wants it more or less. For Lalu and Sharad the future of political direction is hidden in there. Their castes have given them much importance in the party structure. If the Janata Dal becomes the party of every caste, then their vested interests are affected. When Lalu attacked party President S. R. Bommai in Ghaziabad, he responded, "Mr. Lalu, I have also been a chief minister." George [Fernandes'] defeat and Sharad's victory was the defeat of a personage by [a person of] caste. The politics of caste has made the Janata Dal a hostage.

The war between Sharad, Lalu, and Ajit is over the leadership of the middle-of-the way party in the future. These leaders also believe that the time for a high caste prime minister is gone. They believe that the polarization at the Center will determine the prime ministership in the future confrontations. If there is no Janata Dal, then around whom will this polarization occur? Their unity developed because of the future political changes. Only Mulayam Singh is out of it.

His strategy is to save the Congress (I) in north India by giving it new blood and then joining it for the highest position. It is interesting to know that Mulayam had resigned and forced the election in Uttar Pradesh because he did not like Rajiv Gandhi's proposal to join the Congress (I). The Congress (I) had taken back its support because of his action. However, he has changed his opinion about the Congress (I) since then. This a commentary on the situation the Congress (I) is in now rather than on him. These strategies are slowing down the Janata Dal family's unity. In Janata Dal, the election tickets are being given to their own people instead of giving them to persons who can win the election.

* United Janata Dal Said 'Infused With Infectious Hope'

94AS0044A Madras FRONTLINE in English 22 Oct 93 pp 31-32

[Article by S.K. Pande: "A United Janata Dal, Almost"]

[Text] A dramatic, step-by-step build-up, three splinters from the erstwhile Janata Dal have agreed to work together under a common flag, election symbol, and constitution. The announcement signalling the coming together of the Janata Dal (Ajit Singh), the Janata Dal (Bommai) and the Samajwadi Janata Party (Chandra Shekhar) was made by veteran Janata leader S.R. Bommai on September 29 at Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. Conspicuously absent, amid the teeming crowds and general celebration, was the elusive Mulayam Singh Yadav.

Just two days earlier, in New Delhi, the Left parties had reiterated their determination to work for unity between the Janata Dal groups and Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi Party, with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India agreeing upon certain modalities for the elections in U.P. At Ghaziabad, Bihar Chief Minister Lallu Prasad Yadav was deputed to enlist Mulayam Singh's co-operation in these efforts.

The 60 who participated in the day-long deliberations included Bommai, V.P. Singh, Biju Patnaik, Ramakrishna Hegde, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, Sharad Yadav and Lallu Prasad of the Janata Dal(B), Ajit Singh, Rasheed Masood and Sunil Shastri of the Janata Dal(A), and Chandra Shekhar, Devi Lal, Om Prakesh Chautala, Satya Prakash Malviya and Yashwant Sinha of the SJP. Bommai later announced that a five-man committee comprising Patnaik, Lallu Prasad, Masood, Ram Vilas Paswan and Chautala would finalise the organisational structure of the new-look party. While the Bommai group prefers an interim arrangement on this, Ajit Singh is for immediate reallocation of posts as per the constitution.

Setting the tone for the future, Bommai said in his welcome speech to the deliberators, "Politics is not just the art of the possible but working collectively with a give-and-take approach to achieve the common objective. This unity is the need of the hour. It has the goodwill and support of all right-thinking people and the masses. Now we have to move forward with determination to tell the world that we will fight as one man the force of disruption, disintegration, fundamentalism and anti-people policies. We have to take a pledge that we will prove the sceptics wrong."

Claiming that the party was now ready for all exigencies, Bommai's speech was a brief of the new election manifesto. Attacking the Congress(I) and the Bharatiya Janata Party, and significantly not attacking Mulayam Singh, Bommai called for power to the "third force." "In this

testing hour," he said, "personal prejudices and misunderstandings should not stand in the way. If it does, history will not forgive us, people will sideline us. I am convinced that our unified Janata Dal, in alliance with the Left and the National Front, is a formidable force and it can now set the political agenda for the country." The immediate tasks, in the context of the coming elections in U.P., Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi, were implementation of the Mandal Commission report, upholding of secularism and fighting obscurantism, and opposition to multinational corporations.

Modalities

The Janata Dal merger was based upon modalities worked out by a sub-committee and meetings held thereafter. Mulayam Singh was invited to some of these meetings, but he did not attend. Meanwhile, the Left had been carrying on its initiatives untiringly. V.P. Singh's "exile" from Delhi and his subsequent Sadbhavana yatra, despite his poor health, could be said to have galvanised the faction-ridden Janata Dal groups to attempt a merger.

Of course, differences remain, and egos will clash. For the time being, the Janata Dal is infused with infectious hope. The party has already started discussing seat adjustments with the Left for Delhi and is toying with the idea of contesting all the seats. Meanwhile, the focus will shift to Lallu Prasad.

* Ajit Singh Interviewed on Party Unity

94AS0044B Madras FRONTLINE in English
22 Oct 93 p 32

[Interview with Ajit Singh by S.K. Pande]

[Text] Janata Dal leader Ajit Singh is confident of the unified party showing flashes of the past, Mulayam Singh Yadav or no Mulayam Singh Yadav. Ajit Singh, who led a Janata Dal faction, spoke to S.I. Pande at his Akbar Road residence in Delhi on the eve of the merger. Considerably mellowed, Ajit Singh, unlike some other leaders, was for "a quick merger for quick results."

Pande: How will the merger benefit all of you? Will not some seat understanding be better?

Singh: No, no... with a merger, there will be less quarrelling over seats... Basically, of the four units of the erstwhile Janata family, three are getting together. This in itself will have a galvanising effect on the masses. Personally, I am for early merger, but we are getting together in any case, and fighting under one flag. That is definite for the time being. All talks are proceeding smoothly.

Pande: What has been the progress vis-a-vis Mulayam Singh Yadav?

Singh: I would put it this way: if Mulayam Singh persists with his hostile attitude, his isolation will increase. On the other hand, if our unity efforts continue to proceed the way they are, we could be on the road to forming a government in Uttar Pradesh.

Pande: But besides the Mualayam Singh factor, there is the Mahendra Singh Tikait (of the Bharatiya Kisan Union) factor.

Singh: It is more a figment of the imagination and is somewhat overrated. Last time he helped the Bharatiya Janata Party. This time he seems to be helping the Congress, and yet, Tikait being Tikait, for all you know, could well be with us too.

Pande: But Mulayam Singh seems to have a lead over the others in campaign work.

Singh: He could well be a might-have-been-somebody... overestimated.

Pande: He is not alone; there is the Bahujan Samaj Party...

Singh: They are both individuals. Both are one-person parties. The initial aplomb to his aggressive campaign is over. People are now seeing him as a thorn in the way of the non-BJP Opposition. Mulayam Singh is losing credibility, and some even see him as an indirect ally of the BJP. Even the Backward Classes are deserting him. His support to the Som Yagna has further jolted his secular credentials. Even his alliance with Kanshi Ram of the BSP has raised some question marks. In U.P., Kanshi Ram is a firm ally of Mulayam Singh with a line to the Congress, while in M.P. he speaks against the Congress.

Pande: How is the general mood in U.P.?

Singh: Last time's Ram wave is no longer there for the BJP, and we are more united. The Congress is virtually crashing. True, seven parties (large and small) could be in the fray, but basically it is the three sections of the Janata Dal, now getting together, that could make a mark and surprise everybody.

Pande: Is there any quarrelling over the chief ministership in your camp?

Singh: The chief ministership is a non-issue now. Unification will remove other bottlenecks.

Pande: Concretely, what difference do you see between 1991 and now?

Singh: The crowds are more impressive. Our call, "fill-the-jails," was a success. I was especially surprised over the response in Rajasthan.

Pande: What guarantee is there that you will not start quarrelling again?

Singh: We have learnt from experience. Though we are yet to reach our peak, the initial problems seem to be over. We are on the road to unity, and a three-party combination is bound to have a demonstrative effect. It is up to Mulayam Singh to see the writing on the wall.

Pande: Why do you say that the BJP's stars are on the wane?

Singh: There is infighting. The tightness of its hold is loosening and even the response to its yatras is not the same.

*** Ajit Singh Interviewed on Janata Dal Merger, Implications**

94AS0068D Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 24 Oct 93 p 5

[Interview with Ajit Singh by THE STATESMAN; first paragraph THE STATESMAN introduction]

[Text] Ajit Singh's world is Uttar Pradesh. Even when the stalwarts in the "unified" Janata Dal are not exactly sure of making it on their own in Uttar Pradesh, the precariously placed Jat from Baghpat is sanguine. He is banking on farmers, notwithstanding his diminishing hold over the Jat community. Though Ajit Singh claims that he is not aiming for the mukhyamantris pad, (the Chief Minister's chair) his supporters in Janata Dal—albeit a small number—are working overtime to project him as the unified Janata Dal's candidate for chief ministership. Singh is not exactly bothered about the fate of the party in any other State, including Rajasthan and Delhi. Last week Ajit Singh spoke to THE STATESMAN about the unification, the party's prospects in UP and the fate of their rivals.

THE STATESMAN: Where does the "unified" Janata Dal stand vis-a-vis the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and the Congress(I)?

Ajit Singh: The effect of the unification will be felt most in Uttar Pradesh. It seems there will be a four-cornered contest—with a straight fight between JD [Janata Dal] and BJP in Western UP. But in eastern UP we will really be fighting against Mulayam Singh Yadav. Mulayam is actually losing support. I don't know why he is so adamant about not joining us. In Central UP, it will be a triangular fight between the BJP, Congress and Janata Dal.

THE STATESMAN: You are just talking about the assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, whereas we would like you to tell us more about the "unified" Janata Dal.

Ajit Singh: The main fight will be in UP, so what else can I talk about. The merger has already taken place. Now, we are working on our strategy against communal forces.

THE STATESMAN: Will the merger really help? Don't you think an alliance or seat adjustments would have been better?

Ajit Singh: The merger was inevitable. After all, we are fighting for the same cause. If we had not united, all our efforts to defeat the communal forces would have been futile. Now, we have given the people a strong non-Congress and non-BJP alternative. It would have been better if Mulayam had not decided against an understanding with us.

THE STATESMAN: If Mulayam is losing his base, why are you still seeking his support? Are you not confident of fighting the elections without Mulayam's support?

Ajit Singh: We are in an extremely comfortable situation and can win the UP elections on our own. But we don't want him to cut into our votes. It is just a precautionary measure.

THE STATESMAN: Is it true that Mulayam is wary of joining hands with the "unified" Janata Dal because it already has too many aspirants for chief ministership?

Ajit Singh: I would not know that. But Mulayam would have been a very strong candidate for chief ministership.

THE STATESMAN: If your party gets the majority vote would you aspire to become the chief minister of UP? There are rumours that you are planning to contest the elections because of this.

Ajit Singh: I am not aspiring to be the chief minister. It is not necessary that you contest an election to be projected as a candidate for chief ministership. Sharad Pawar was not a member of the assembly when he was sent to Maharashtra. Even Narasimha Rao was not an MP [Member of Parliament] when he was sworn in as Prime Minister.

THE STATESMAN: There is a feeling that the BJP is still strong in UP and will take advantage of the inner squabbles in the Janata Dal and the Congress party. How do you rate its chances now that the Ram Temple issue is back with the CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] charge-sheet?

Ajit Singh: This time, the BJP does not even have an outside chance. And they know this. That is why they are raising the mandir issue again. The Congress seems to be in a real mess. Its leaders are fighting each other. As for the CBI charge-sheet, nobody believes either the Congress(I) or the BJP. Both these parties will be routed.

THE STATESMAN: What are the issues in the forthcoming elections?

Ajit Singh: Unemployment, worsening condition of farmers and poverty are the only issues. And we are the only party raising these issues.

THE STATESMAN: Is the Mandal issue no longer relevant?

Ajit Singh: The Supreme Court has already delivered a judgment and it is no longer going to affect the voting pattern. This will not work in Uttar Pradesh. Only farmers will be in a decisive position.

THE STATESMAN: But your new party's star campaigner, V.P. Singh, is only banking on the Mandal issue.

Ajit Singh: No, he is rating other issues as well. You can't say that he has limited himself only to the Mandal issue. He is fighting for social justice to the backward classes.

*** Janata Dal Strategy Viewed**

94AS0068N Madras FRONTLINE in English 5 Nov 93 pp 23-24

[Article by S.K. Pande: "Unity for a Purpose; in the Janata Dal Pariwar"]

[Text] Despite the hopes raised by the Ghaziabad conclave, the Janata Dal *parivar* is growing more and more unsure of a formal merger before the Assembly elections.

The message is clear: "Let us see if we can campaign together, while we prepare the ground for merger later."

The scene of action has shifted to the Janata Dal headquarters at Jantar Mantar, Delhi, though closed-door meetings take place elsewhere, notably at the residence of Ajit Singh, who is the focus of attention at present. What the wrangling of several days has produced is an apex committee with Ajit Singh as chairman, a compromise to fight elections staying together. The high-power committee also includes S.R. Bommai, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, Sharad Yadav, Ram Vilas Paswan, Rashid Masood and Om Prakash Chautala. There would be two special invitees, Biju Patnaik and Lallu Prasad Yadav, Chief Ministers of Orissa and Bihar respectively.

STATE COMMITTEES

The committee, with the right to co-opt members, will finalise the list of candidates. It has the power to appoint separate committees for Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and Mizoram, which will recommend names. Madhu Dandavate has been authorised to sign all correspondence with the Election Commission regarding Janata Dal candidates and the allocation of the party symbol for them.

The apex committee will formulate proposals for restructuring the party organisation at the Central and State levels, which would be ratified by the national council of the unified party.

In principle, a unified Janata Dal is to be projected as ready to contest all the seats in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi, in alliances with the Left parties. The talks between Samajwadi Party supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav and Lallu Prasad Yadav have not yielded much dividends, but another round is to be tried. However, within the Janata Dal *parivar*, some agreements have been reached; for instance, it has been agreed to field all the candidates who won last time for the seats they held.

Regarding seat adjustments with the Left, there is a hardening of attitudes on both sides, for it is bargaining time. The CPI [Communist Party of India] and the CPI(M) [Communist of India-Marxist] have identified 12 to 15 seats in Delhi, 75 in Uttar Pradesh, 20 in Rajasthan, eight in Himachal Pradesh and 40 in Madhya Pradesh, which they could contest. By the time the final picture emerges, they could well have settled for less than half these. And, though the desire to fight jointly is there, the Janata Dal seems to be eyeing some of the Left pockets. The Left, particularly the CPI(M), is not too keen to surrender its strongholds.

In Uttar Pradesh, the CPI seems to have developed an affinity for Mulayam Singh while the CPI(M) remains closer to V.P. Singh. Yet, both the parties are sure that difficulties will finally be ironed out. A section of the Janata Dal leadership does not rule out an *entente cordiale* with Mulayam Singh, in a limited number of seats.

In the event of Mulayam Singh refusing to relent, the Janata Dal strategy seems to be to project Ajit Singh as its candidate for the Chief Ministership of Uttar Pradesh. Party spokesman Harikishore Singh told FRONTLINE: "A major hurdle has indeed been overcome by forging the unity of various segments of the erstwhile Janata *parivar*. The picture could have been better, and yet the present one is the best under the circumstances. We could still emerge as the Number One political force in Uttar Pradesh."

Harikishore Singh's is not a tall claim. The Janata Dal seems to be working on the assumption that in Uttar Pradesh it is still anybody's game, for there are pockets where the Mulayam Singh factor is non-existent. Hitting the campaign trail for the party will be V.P. Singh and Ajit Singh, and Chandra Shekhar can turn out to be a star attraction. The party's calculations have also taken into account what one leader called the Jat psyche, kindly disposed, to Ajit Singh, especially in western Uttar Pradesh.

The party hopes to prove itself to be a resurgent force with some good show also in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi. It is looking for a clear base among the Other Backward Classes, the minorities and the Dalits. In Rajasthan, it is toying with the idea of presenting the veteran, Sampat Ram, as its star.

The manifestos are yet to be released, but the Janata Dal is set to play the Mandal card, besides giving a call to battle the twin dangers of communalism and corruption. A scathing attack on Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao is certain to be launched soon. The ammunition for the first salvo will be provided by the dropping of the CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] cases involving the Harshad Mehta charge.

As the countdown begins, the party is generally hopeful of a coordinated fight against the BJP and the Congress(I) in the Hindi heartland.

Muslim Vote

* Fierce Battle Forecast For Muslim Votes

93AS1114B New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 2 Aug 93 p 4

[Article by Asrar Khan: "In Order To Capture the Muslim Vote"]

[Text] The time is near for holding elections in the four BJP-ruled state vidhan sabhas that the central government had dismissed after the Ayodhya incident. The dates for these elections have not been set yet, however, these are expected to take place by the end of this year. The left-wing parties are trying to lure the Muslim voters in the context of these elections. The left-wing parties have neither any respect nor any hopes in these states (Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh). The fact is the BJP is the strongest party in these states. Its main opponents are the Janata Dal (B) and the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh and the Congress Party in other states. Even though the Muslim vote is not going to be decisive in the four states, almost all political parties have decided to do something for the Muslims in the context of helping minorities.

The Congress took the initiative before other parties and on 3 July advised the Congress president to implement the recommendations of the minorities commission and immediately establish a minorities economic development committee. In addition, minority members are to be appointed at high positions in banks and government offices. Proportions of minorities in various departments be made known and the investigation of the Ayodhya incident be accelerated. The plan under which the Congress Party has raised these considerations for the minorities was formed by Arjun Singh. Ghulam Nabi Azad, Abdul Rehman Antullay, and ten other members had participated in planning this strategy. It is a commonly known fact that the Congress Party has lost its presence in Uttar Pradesh and the Muslim voters in this state have attached themselves to the parties that might defeat the BJP.

Around 7-8 July, the BJP changed its minority cell into a minority front in order the strengthen its efforts. Arif Baig, the minority cell head, let the BJP President Lal Karishna Advani know that this cell was not effective in attracting the Muslims toward the party, and this cell be changed into a front and a major platform to unite Muslims be prepared. Arif Baig himself said that the BJP is most concerned about the minorities and wants to protect them from superfluous demands in order to establish means for their continuous and all-round advancement. He does not want any kind of reservations quota for the Muslims. Instead, he wants them to fearlessly participate in all the competitions. All BJP leaders including Arif Baig are determined to ask for all kind of help for the Muslims except for the quota system. This is being done even though Kalyan Singh believes that only 46 seats of out the 425 vidhan sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh will be decided by the Muslim votes, and this would not affect BJP's return to power. He claims that the BJP can win about 300 seats. Anyhow, they have opened a platform for the Muslims in the BJP and some Muslims, especially in western Uttar Pradesh, are looking hopefully toward this party. Meanwhile, the BJP had nominated 1721 Muslim candidates in the panchayat elections in West Bengal. Of these, 57 were successfully elected. Therefore, it is expected that Muslim participation in the BJP will continue to rise.

Before the BJP changed the Muslim cell to a front, Mulayam Singh Yadav, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister, had gone to Delhi on 3 July and demanded separate reservations quota for the Muslims. He said that the faith of the Muslim was already shaken and this called for formation of a commission to determine the proportion of jobs that must be reserved for the Muslims. Even the Muslims reacted strongly against Mulayam Singh's demand and they accused him of trying to push the nation to the brink of another partition or causing new problems for the Muslims. The reason for this reaction is the fact that the Mandal Commission has already including the Muslims in backward class and there already is a minorities commission. They do not think here is a need for forming a separate commission for the Muslims to determine quotas for them.

Making such demands is analogous to building castles in the air, and is especially harmful for the Janata Dal and Mulayam Singh. If the Janata Dal continued this attitude, it will end up being a Muslim party one day. Therefore, the party should make decisions keeping national interests in its mind. It is also true that no party can win its way to government just by getting Muslim votes. We do not understand why these politician do not provide a slogan to increase self-confidence of the minorities so that they are able to break out of their limited domain.

* Congress (I) Failing Bid for Muslim Votes

94AS0008B New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 25 Sep 93 p 7

[Article by Safaddar Rizvi: "Congress (I) Fails To Win Muslim Religious Leaders"]

[Text] New Delhi, 24 September—The Congress (I) has been unsuccessful in winning Muslim religious leaders so far. In a meeting of the All India Tehriq-i Himayat-ul Islam, the imams and ulemas cursed the Congress Party. They also announced that the imams did not support the Congress Party.

The meeting of the Tehriq lasted until late last night. People from other places, in addition to those living in the capital, took part in it. This meeting was held under the chairmanship of Mufti Mukarram Ahmed, imam of the Fatehpuri Jamma Masjid, who said that the Muslims should vote after thinking this time, and should try to defeat the communal forces.

A religious mandate will be given about the party to be voted for. This will be decided after the parties have announced their election manifestos. Mufti Mukarram Ahmed said that the parties have not issued their manifestos yet, and that it would be immature to decide which party to support. Mr. Ahmed criticized the Congress, which had failed to protect the Babri Masjid, in his speech. He said that it was encouraging communalism. As for the BJP, it is a communal party.

Mr. Ahmed had, until now, leaned toward the Congress Party. Recently, he also met with Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. Mr. Rao had promised to see him again within 15 days. Two months have passed, however, and Mr. Ahmed has not been invited for talks. During the last meeting, Mr. Ahmed demanded of the prime minister that the Babri Masjid be built at the same site.

Maulana Mufti Moazzam Ahmed, the president of the group, also criticized the Congress. He said that the Congress government always makes promises without fulfilling them. He blamed the Congress government for the increasing factionalism in the country, saying that the government had dismantled all the laws. If there were laws, he said, then criminals could have been punished. He added that whatever demands were made to help the Muslims were ignored by Mr. Rao. The people coming from different areas to the capital were so angry that one speaker, Mirza Saddiq, when trying to praise Congress, was shouted down. Mirza Saddiq said about the Congress (I) that it has a good record, but that it has always exploited Muslims.

According to Moazzam Ahmed, the important thing that came from this meeting was that all imams said that they did not support the Congress (I). It was wrong of Jamil Iliasi to tell Prime Minister Narasimha Rao that the imams of the nation supported the Congress Party. Iliasi was trying to sell the imams; however, they would never let this happen. Mr. Ahmed said that Iliasi wanted to quietly sell the imams to Mr. Rao. They would never tolerate this.

Maulana Naimuddin said that all the governments practiced extremities against the Muslims; however, no government has committed as many atrocities against Muslims as has the Congress Party. It was the Congress Party that had the lock of the Babri Masjid opened and aggravated the whole situation, letting the mosque be destroyed.

Mufti Janul Aabdin said that the present situation in the country was not conducive to elections. There was a lot of tension between the political parties. They are not willing to work with one another. How can communal forces be taken care of in such a situation?

In this meeting, held in the Fatehpuri Jamma Masjid, the Babri Masjid issue was prevalent in all discussions. Almost every imam mentioned this issue and accused the Congress (I).

The organization passed a resolution demanding that all unfairness practiced against minorities be stopped. They also demanded reconstruction of the Babri Masjid, and appealed to the political parties to make clear in their manifestos what plans they had about rebuilding the Babri Masjid.

This was the third meeting held in the capital about Muslim votes. Before it, meetings were held by Shahi Imam Abdullah Bukhari and Javed Habib, former member of the Babri Masjid Action Committee. In this meeting, they talked about making the secular forces stronger. Mr. Javid Habib had also talked about endorsing the Congress Party.

* Muslim Imam Said to Give 'Ultimatum' to Janata Factions

94AS0007D New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 25 Sep 93 p 10

[Article: "Shahi Imam Gives Ultimatum for Unity Among Parties"]

[Text] New Delhi, 21 September—Sayyed Abdullah Bukhari, the head imam of the Jamma Masjid, has given an ultimatum: If all the secular parties, including V. P. Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav, do not unite by 30 September, then he will announce by 7 October from the Jamma Masjid whom the Muslims will vote for. Mulayam Singh Yadav, the leader of the Samajwadi Party, has adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward the Muslim leaders. Because of this, in an advisory committee called to bring V. P. Singh and Mulayam Singh to the same stage, no decision could be made. Another meeting has been called for 7 October to make a final decision. In addition, a committee of Muslim leaders has also been formed. This committee will talk to all parties about unity.

Mulayam Singh Yadav, the former U. P. chief minister, has not paid any attention to the imam's letter about unity. He replied on the phone that he would be busy organizing a rally until 24 September, and that he would respond afterwards. However, former Prime Minister V. P. Singh has sent his response to Imam Bukhari. He expressed the need for all secular parties to unite in his letter.

Ahmed Bukhari, the assistant imam, said in a press conference today that the Shahi Imam said in his speech that if he failed in uniting V. P. Singh and Mulayam Singh, he would make an announcement from the Jamma Masjid about who the Muslims would vote for. He said that 250 million Muslims could not be ignored. He challenged V. P. Singh and Mulayam Singh, telling them that they should unite, or Muslims would use their power to make decisions on their own. Mr. Bukhari said that unity was essential to saving the country. If there was no unity, the BJP would win, and not only the Muslims would be hurt, but also the backward castes and tribes. If there is no unity, then along with the Muslims, the votes of the Dalits would also be affected. Communal forces would benefit from this decision. He said that after the Babri Masjid was torn down, the same people broke the statue of Baba Saheb, Bhimrao Ambedekar. This must be condemned.

Representatives from all parts of the country took part in this meeting. Leaders and workers of the Janata Dal, the Samajwadi Party, the Congress (I), and the Muslim League expressed their opinions. A notable aspect of the meeting was that it appeared to be organized by the Janata Dal. In addition to several Muslim legislators, including Abdul Samad Siddiqi and Mohammed Afzal, the following leaders were also present: Shuad Iqbal, chairman of the minority cell of the Delhi state Janata Dal; Pravez Hashimi; Rahat Mehmood Chowdhery; Wasim Ghazi; Zamir Ahmed; and Ansari Ilias Anju, general secretary of the Uttar Pradesh Youth Janata Dal. The Samajwadi Party's Shafiqurehman Barq, former legislator Shamim Ahmed, Maulana Muzaffar Hussein Kachhochvi, action committee member Jaffaryab Jeelani, and legislator Abdul Gafur also emphasized unity.

Assistant Imam Mr. Bukhari said that they could not recommend the Congress Party at any price as long as Narasimha Rao was the prime minister. If Mr. Rao resigned, then they could consider the Congress Party. He said that Muslims would never pardon Mr. Rao, because he deceived the whole country. Mr. Rao was responsible for the destruction of the Babri Masjid and making the BJP stronger.

The speakers in the five-hour meeting also said that if the secular forces did not unite, then the election should be boycotted. Some of the leaders and workers of the Samajwadi Party became emotional and said that if the party did not unite, they would resign.

* Muslim Efforts to Unite VP, Mulaym Singh Said to Fail

94AS0007E New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 27 Sep 93 pp 1,10

[Article: "Muslim Leaders Fail To United Mulayam Singh and V.P. Singh"]

[Text] Lucknow, 26 September—The Muslim leaders who had been trying to create a friendship between former Prime Minister V. P. Singh and Mulayam Singh have returned empty-handed. At the insistence of the Delhi Jamma Masjid, efforts were made to unite both leaders. A deputation of these Muslim leaders met V. P. Singh today in Lucknow. Last night, the leaders talked with Mulayam Singh in Delhi. Mulayam Singh is adamant on defeating the BJP in Uttar Pradesh and by himself. Today, these leaders expressed their helplessness to V. P. Singh. Said V. P. Singh, "Mulayam Singh's attitude is very dangerous."

According to Basi Khan, member of the group is trying to form a friendship between the two leaders, "The 24 September rally spoiled Mulayam Singh. He has become very vain because of it. Muslims attended this rally because we did not stop them. Now if he succeeds in getting these Muslims back to the rally after insulting the imam, then we shall call him successful." On 23 September, the shahi imam of Jamma Masjid, Abdullah Bukhari, gave an ultimatum to Mulayam Singh Yadav: If he did not join forces by 7 October, then Mr. Bukhari would make another decision on his own. In this meeting of Muslim leaders, lawyers, and intellectuals held at Jamma Masjid, a resolution to this effect was also passed. A 15-member committee was also formed as a last-ditch effort to bring about unity. This committee was to have both leaders talk for cooperation with each other. Eleven members of this committee met with Mulayam Singh in New Delhi yesterday. The committee organizer, legislator Bhim Afzal, refused to give details of these talks; however, he did admit that the talks were not very positive.

The assistant imam did not participate in yesterday's talks with Mulayam Singh. This happened because of the comments that Mulayam Singh made about the shahi imam in the Friday rally. Since the assistant imam did not participate in yesterday's talk, he did not go to Lucknow, either. The sources in this group informed us that if Mulayam Singh does not change his attitude by 30 September, then the group of Muslim leaders and religious men will call a Muslim conference to let people know about reality. Afterwards, under the leadership of the assistant imam, a huge rally of Muslims will be called either at Lucknow or Delhi. In this rally, the shahi imam will condemn Mulayam Singh's attitude and appeal to Muslim voters. According to a member who is a legislator of this group, this would be a very harmful deal for Mulayam Singh.

Meanwhile, Mulayam Singh Yadav has not responded to the shahi imam's letter, in which he asked him to unite with the other party. The letter was written by Imam Bukhari to Mulayam Singh and V. P. Singh on 12 September. Imam Bukhari has expressed concern about the division of Muslim votes in his upcoming election in his letter, written in Urdu. He said, "The distance between you two is increasing rather than decreasing. We are afraid that this election will repeat the history of 1991. We do not want to repeat it." Imam Bukhari warned Mulayam Singh Yadav in this letter, "In spite of your joining Kanshi Ram, you will not be able to stop the communal forces (BJP). You may have different opinions about this issue; however, you shall not oppose us. What you have said publicly about V. P. Singh recently is not appropriate. You should not say all these things. It is not good for you. It will only hurt you." V. P. Singh replied to this letter on 16 September and said that he was always ready for unity; however, Mulayam Singh has not responded to this letter yet.

Mulayam Singh has [text illegible]. Kanshi Ram is arriving in Delhi on Monday. He will talk with Mulayam Singh there, even though Kanshi Ram has already expressed his opinion about unity. According to him, it is not necessary to unite with anyone. The Muslim leaders believe that Kanshi Ram is the road block in their effort to talk with Mulayam Singh. According to Dr. Shamim Ahmed, another member of this group, "Mulayam Singh is confused. He will learn about his mistake during the elections." Dr. Shamim Ahmed is a member of Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi Party. From among this 15-member committee, three are members of Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi Party. These includes Maulana Muzaffar Hussein Khachochvi, Shafiqurehman Barq, and Dr. Shamim Ahmed. The other members are Shamim Afzal, M. A. Fatimi, Abdul Samad Siddiqui (all three are legislators), Ifarnullah Khan, Maulana Adid, Nawabbudin Mehmoud, Pravez Hashimi, and Basi Khan. Yesterday, 11 of these members met with Mulayam Singh at his North Avenue home. Today, these people met with former Prime Minister V. P. Singh in Lucknow. V. P. Singh stayed in Lucknow in order to meet with this group.

Legislator Bhim Afzal, responding to Mulayam Singh's accusation that politics cannot be run by a mosque, said, "Politics are not being run by a mosque. The meeting, of course, was held in the mosque. In this meeting, in addition to the imam, hundreds of Muslim leaders, intellectuals, and lawyers were gathered. A resolution was passed at the meeting unanimously. The decision was not made by the imam. Because of recent incidents, Muslim politics are changing in the state, and Mulayam Singh will be hurt by it. V. P. Singh was successful in his campaign because he wants unity, and Mulayam Singh is hindering it." After the left wing leaders, he exposed Mulayam Singh. The educated Muslims in both states seem to already be supporting V. P. Singh.

* Muslim Voters Seen Facing Dilemma

94AS0040B New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 2 Oct 93 p 6

[Article by Asrar Khan: "Muslim Voters in a Quandary"]

[Text] All the debates, statements, surveys, and bye-election results indicate that the majority of Indian Muslims are more bitter at the central government and the Congress (I) party than the BJP over the Ayodhya fiasco. If truth be asked an average Muslim has developed an angry feeling toward Congress (I) leaders. It is the first time after the independence that the Muslims have become adamant

about not accepting the Congress (I) Party in any form. That is why the Muslim Majlis in Uttar Pradesh appraising that, except for in Uttar Pradesh, there is no alternative to the BJP in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan , and Himachal Pradesh, it is advising the Muslims to instead of voting for the Congress (I) they should totally boycott voting. Thus, if the BJP is a frying pan then the Congress is the fire. The Majlis' call is getting support from religious Muslim leaders also. However, there is the question about Muslims boycotting voting. It also means creation of such a serious situation that the country is faced with another partition and the remaining India loses its identity just like Pakistan. Because of this fact, the Muslim voter is agitated and in a dilemma. The elections has been announced and they must make a decision—good or bad.

The Muslim are leaning toward the left-wing parties as indicated by the results of Kotapallam bye-election for the Lok Sabha seat and Chowrangee vidhan sabha election in West Bengal. Both these seats were supposedly belonged to the Congress (I) Party, however, this resulted because of the Muslim voters' turn around. The BJP received 5,000 more votes in Chowrangee than it did in the last election. Based on this, one can say that the time is not far when the BJP will become the main opposition party in West Bengal. In Kerala, a 26-years old CPI (M) student leader defeated a maverick Congress (I) leader by over 100,000 votes. Chief Minister Karunakaran himself admitted that the Congress lost because the Muslims did not vote for it. Anyhow, Kerala and West Bengal are the states where the Muslims have left-wing fronts to replace the Congress (I). What will they do and for whom will they vote where they want to defeat the BJP? This important question is gaping at them.

In Uttar Pradesh, the Janata Dal (B), Janata Dal (A), and the Samajwadi Janata Party are willing to unite on one platform, however, this can hurt the BJP only at most in 100 election districts. Mulayam Singh and Kanshi Ram have formed a separate coalition, and it appears that they may have an agreement with the Congress (I). If this happens that Mulayam Singh and Kanshi Ram, who are flying high now, will be embarrassed. The scheduled caste people are also against the Congress (I) now. The Muslims are not willing to hear the argument that it is essential to support the Congress (I) in order to defeat the BJP. In the end, the Muslims who are supporting the Mulayam Singh coalition and the Harijans will end up supporting V.P. Singh. At that time, it is possible that Mulayam Singh, Kanshi Ram, the Congress (I) all three join forces. Now the real fight would be between the BJP and the Janata Dal and one of these will be in position to form the state government. The pro-BJP newspapers are already mocking Mulayam Singh, and some people already know his real self. Therefore, Muslim organizations such as the Milli Council, Jamaat-i islami, and Shahi Imam are pressuring Mulayam Singh to make some arrangement with V.P. Singh. However, there seem to be no hope of these two joining, and if they all remain divided then the vote boycott might show some effect.

The BJP is directly competing with the Congress (I) in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh. However, the Congress (I) leaders in these states are asking the prime minister to apologize to the Muslims over the Ayodhya issue so that the Muslims vote for the Congress (I). The political observers might call it a slick move by the Congress (I). They postulate that the Congress (I) should present such an atmosphere to the Muslims that they forget the whole issue and make it a question of their pride. If the Congress (I) apologizes at that time, they will forgive it. However, the Congress leaders are deluding themselves. This time around, the Muslims will not be deceived by anyone.

At present the great dilemma the Muslim voters are facing is which way to go to hurt the BJP and at the same time teach a lesson to the Congress (I). Should they boycott votes or participate in the process? Almost all political parties have formed minority fronts or forums. Even one of BJP's national leader, Aarif Baig, is trying to pull the Muslim voters toward the BJP. The Congress (I) is using its Qaumi Tanzim to attract Muslim to it. However, here also they are asking for the prime minister to apologize. In this situation, if the Muslims boycott voting, the BJP will definitely benefit. If they do not boycott then the question is should they vote for a party against their conscience?

* Leanings of Muslim Voters Viewed, Forecast

94AS0058E Varanasi AJ in Hindi 14 Oct 93 p 4

[Analysis by Dr. Baldev Raj Gupta: "Islam and not Muslim is the Religious Term"]

[Excerpts] All the compacts of the leaders, polarizations of parties, and accusations and cauter-accusations during the vidhan sabha election in Delhi and the four states will be meaningless until the voters seal these with their approval. The Janata Dal, in spite of its internal strife, has formed an agreement for elections. V.P. Singh's Janata Dal (B), Ajit Singh's Janata Dal (A), and Chandra Shekhar's Samajwadi Janata Party as well as Devi Lal and Om Prakash Chautala et al have all joined forces. Imam Bukhari of Jama Masjid is supporting them.

Some meetings were held in Delhi to show the unity among the Muslims. All of them also tried to get Mulayam Singh with them, however, Mulayam Singh did not let anyone even touch him.

In Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, where the BJP is faring better, it has announced the names of its candidates for the 68 and 320 seats respectively. The Congress (I) is busy compiling a list of the problems that the BJP had created during its rule in Madhya Pradesh. The Congress (I) is being pressured by four or five people there.

The Muslim voters make up 18 percent of the total voters in Bhopal, however, they are very well informed. The have formed the Madhya Pradesh Progressive Muslims Forum. Hundreds of Muslims there want to forget every thing and talk about joining the mainstream with courage. Akhtar Rizvi from Bombay thinks that the mosque is not a viable issue for the Muslims. Education is the main issue and the greatest issue is economic progress. The Muslims will support whichever party promises to support these two issues.

The Influence of Muslim Voters

We will not go back very far. The Congress (I) was defeated by the Janata Dal in 1989 and by the BJP in 1991 in Uttar Pradesh. There are 85 Parliament and 425 vidhan sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh. From among these, the Muslim voters control 30 Parliament and 170 vidhan sabha seats. The Muslims make up 17 percent of the total 73 million voters here. In some districts, their population makes up 10 to 40 percent of total population. In Uttar Pradesh, they make up 42 percent in Rampur, 40 percent in Muradabad, 37 percent in Saharanpur. No political party can easily ignore the Muslims in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP says that nationalist Muslims who care for this land are with it. The fact is that majority of the Muslims are with the Janata Dal. Mulayam Singh of the Samajwadi Party believes that the leaders have never helped the backward classes. The people trusted the leaders again and again and the leaders betrayed them each time. He believes that after checking his history and his actions, not only Muslims but also the backward classes and Harijans will support him. The Congress (I) tries to show its secular history. The Congress (I) gave up a lot for the Muslims and had maintained the unity of the nation. It believes that every secular voter will support it.

Unlike Uttar Pradesh, Muslim issues are not very important for voters perspective in Madhya Pradesh. The Harijans and the aborigines are important there. Still, there are 18 percent of total population in Bhopal, 11 percent in Ujjain, and 13 percent Muslim voters in Khandwa. The aborigine and Harijans make up 38 percent in Madhya Pradesh and 30 percent in Rajasthan of total populations there. The Muslims have influence in some election districts in Delhi and Rajasthan, however, it is not much.

Many of our friends and members of the elite Muslims such as doctors, lawyers, professors, leaders, and journalists believe that whoever controls Uttar Pradesh also rules in Delhi. We hope it does not happen that no one party is able to form government in Uttar Pradesh. Still, Narasimha Rao has negated this belief of Uttar Pradesh people by becoming the prime minister.

Other Parties

* Bahujan Samaj Leader Interviewed on Congress, BJP

93AS1094A Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 31 Jul 93 p 7

[Kanshi Ram Interviewed by Prabha Jagannathan: "Both Congress and BJP Are Corrupt"]

[Text] Is the Bahujan Samaj Party-Mulayam combine moving closer to the Congress in the post-Harshad period?

Both the Congress and the BJP are extremely corrupt parties. They are hand-in-glove with the business community. I see this not as a question of Rs 1 crore, but of the thousands of crores of rupees that both the parties have been swindling. Prime Minister dooba hai, is se mujhe afsos nahin hai, mager chullu bhar pani mein dooba hai, is se afsos hai. (I don't regret the fact that the Prime Minister has sunk so low, but that he has sunk in a fistful of water).

A: People may perceive us as moving closer to the Congress because they see us launching a bigger attack on the BJP and going softer on the Congress. However, in the crucial arena of Uttar Pradesh, 52 per cent of the seats are with the BJP, while all the rest hold on to 48 per cent of the seats. Naturally, our main target for attack is the BJP. The congress' high caste votebank has moved over to the BJP. We certainly do not want the Congress to be weaker, because that will now mean gains for the BJP.

Q: You have always maintained that the Congress is as bad as the BJP. Where do you stand on the Congress today?

A: There is no question of changing our stance of supporting the Congress. Under no circumstances will we consider any alliance with the Congress even in states other than UP. We still maintain that in the long run, the Congress is more dangerous since it has pretensions to being secular, while pursuing communal politics. With the BJP, we know exactly where we stand. They have no pretensions. But we believe that we will reach half our goal if we trounce the BJP in UP. They will then be barred from entering the threshold of Delhi. Once we defeat them in UP, we have no problems if the BJP wins in other states.

Q: Why have you been meeting senior Congress leaders, including P. V. Narasimha Rao and Arjun Singh?

A: It is in our interest that the Congress is revitalised. They should pick up courage and fight the BJP. Arjun Singh has been attempting to put the strength back into the Congress. It is in the course of these attempts that I met Congress leaders.

Q: In your public rallies in Uttar Pradesh, you have toned down your rhetoric against the upper caste Hindus, as has your ally, Mulayam Singh. Mr Mulayam Singh even asserted his support of the Chandraswami-engineered Som yagna. And you have been talking about Muslims appeasement in politics...

A: In 1990, Mulayam and V. P. Singh competed for appeasing Muslims. And the Congress and the BJP competed to appease upper caste Hindus. But they want him to dance straight. I say, why dance at all?

Q: What is your alliance's stand on the mandir-masjid issue?

A: We have no interest in the controversy. When we come to power, we will allow the courts to go by the evidence provided from all parties and take a decision on the basis of that. If the trusts mooted by the government should decide to settle the issue out of courts, we are all for it. But we will not get into the trap of promising either a mandir or a masjid to anyone at that site in Ayodhya. In fact, if I hadn't forbidden him from stooping to the appeasement of Muslims, Mulayam Singh would have promised the masjid at the site in Ayodhya.

* Mulayam Singh Said To Solicit Mafia, Criminal Candidates

94AS0055C New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 13 oct 93 p 3

[Article: "Samajwadi Party Opens Doors for Criminals in its Manifesto"]

[Text] Lucknow, 12 October. The Samajwadi Party's election manifesto had opened all the doors of the party to the criminals and the "Mafia." This is the only party that has made attractive announcements for such persons. The Samajwadi Party said in its manifesto that if this party is able to form its government, it will refute Article 144, Gunda Act, and the Gangster Act. The Samajwadi Party (SP) considers these laws to be unconstitutional. These laws persecute the people. All political parties have condemned this SP announcement.

This SP announcement has helped increase business of the people associated with the criminal world. The gangsters and Mafia people had being playing a major part in the state after the 1980 election. The number of such unsavory elements reaching the state vidhan sabha has been gradually increasing. Such an announcement is a blessing to such persons. The SP people have been demanding ending Article 144 even during Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia's time. However, the demand for invalidating the Gunda and Gangster Acts is surprising. Article 144 is a central government law and no state can remove it or make any amendment to it.

The second law is Gunda Act. Mulayam Singh Yadav has announced ending this law as soon as he forms his government. Interestingly, this special law was passed by Mulayam Singh's political guru Chowdhery Charan Singh in 1969-70. Now Mulayam Singh wants to end the legacy of Charan Singh. The Gangster Act was passed in 1986-87 by the Bahadur Singh government in Uttar Pradesh to control the Mafia movement there.

Ram Sharan Das, president of the sate SP, supports ending these laws. He said that these harass the people without any reason. Article 144 is used for stopping the non-Congress (I) persons activities. The Congress (I) and the BJP governments have used the Gunda Act and the Gangster Act to jail innocent people without any reason. "These laws were used against our party on purpose." Kalraj Misra, the state BJP president, said that one cannot help if most of the criminals happened to be in their party. Says Kalraj Misra, "Mulayam Singh has made this announcement under pressure from the criminals. He has classified it as a welfare project! Only the courts can understand who will benefit from it. This is the method the SP has adopted to encourage criminal and anti-social elements. This party wants to use these people for the election."

Mahavir Prasad, the state Congress (I) president, also believes that this announcement will help increase anarchy. He said, "the government's job is to establish law and order, and Article 144 is for that purpose. Mulayam Singh Yadav wants to disrupt legal system. The people will understand the truth about it." Rewati Raman Singh, opposition leader of the dismissed vidhan sabha, said, "it is absurd. This will result in a kind of anarchy we cannot even imagine. This law is used to stop anarchy. Why does not he announce dismissing all courts, laws, and the constitution? This will give full freedom to everyone to do whatever they want." This announcement is being considered very important knowing how musclemen are used in the state election.

* Chandra Shekhar Interviewed on Election Atmospherics

94AS0059A New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 16 Oct 93 p 2

[Interview with Chandra Shekhar, former prime minister: "There is Danger of National Disunity From Both Congress and BJP"]

[Text] New Delhi, 15 October. Former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar believes that the nation is at a pivotal point just like it was in 1975. The economic policy of the Congress (I) and the sectarian policy of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have endangered the nation's unity. He also believes that the present Congress (I) government and the BJP have some secret agreement.

Chandra Shekhar believes that the unity of the Janata family has given all the forces that have the country's interest in their mind a joint platform. The Janata Dal could become the last weapon to fight the war. The JANSATTA had a lengthy talk with him recently.

[JANSATTA] What issues will emerge during this election?

[Shekhar] It is difficult to say which issues will emerge during the election. Even a minor issue becomes big, especially now when the tendency to fuel emotions here in the capital is very prevalent. It is imperative that we jointly oppose these efforts. The issues should reflect the needs of the masses. However, these are neither on the lips of the leaders nor being voiced by the media. These people are interested only in playing with emotions. Three months ago, Atal Behari Bajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani never stopped telling us that they were not going to make Rama temple an issue. However, they have only this issue when the election time arrived. The government also has started to stimulate talks about the Ayodhya incidents. It appears that all this is being done deliberately to help the BJP.

Those who care for the country should try to give the right direction to these issues. Wherever in the world they had religious rule, they also had dictatorship. I am afraid that India will not be an exception to this rule. The economic policy of the present Congress (I) rulers and the BJP is one and the same. Some of the leaders in the RSS and the BJP have raised their voices about the government policy over swadeshi products, self-dependence, and multinational companies. They reflect the voice of millions of people. A country is built by the hard work of ten of millions of people. An densely-populated country like India can make progress only when hundreds of millions of hands work hard and increase production. Having some people sitting on piles of wealth and the rest of the population at the brink of hunger just will not work. Therefore, our goal is equality. Doing something that is unacceptable to the society just because of helplessness or just to get even will

prove suicidal. We have examples from many other countries. There is the example of the Soviet Union. Our economic policies must be reformed. We should practice liberalism, however, we must make sure that everyone benefits from it. We should not practice it in a way that some people are given the opportunity to sweep up wealth and the rest are given the freedom to die of hunger. This just will not work. The people breathed the air of democracy after our independence. Bad times shakes us up. If we try to change ourselves blindly just because of other people's experience, there will be such tension in the society that we will not be able to escape it. The economic policy and communalism both are endangering our nation's unity.

[JANSATTA] The Mandal Commission also had created tension.

[Shekhar] Those who are socially backward are, unfortunately, also economically deprived. Everyone from Kaka Kalelkar to Mandal have said that they should get reserved quotas. Karpuri Thakur had implemented the reservation policy in Bihar in 1977. There were some opposition to it. The Janata Party established a committee under the leadership of Shanti Bhushan. Karpuri Thakur ordered reserved quotas based on the recommendations of this committee. This was later called the "Karpuri formula." The Janata Party established the Mandal Commission and the V.P. Singh government implemented its recommendations. The courts also considered all this appropriate. We failed to explain this clearly to the people, and this resulted in tension. There are poor and unemployed persons among the high caste people also. The Janata Dal is making sure that they are not ignored. The Janata Dal will get 10 percent job reservations for the high caste poor.

If we ignore the helplessness and wishes of the backward classes, our society will disintegrate. However, we should not make any hasty decision. No one has lost a job or got one, however, people have already started to get angry at each others. We did not present the solution of the problem appropriately.

[JANSATTA] The caste problem has become an enduring issue. This could also polarize the BJP. Your party is also going through polarization because of this...

[Shekhar] Whenever politics is separated from socio-economic issues, there will be harmful results. We either do not understand these or ignore these after understanding them. No one wants to wait for long in politics now; there is no patience. That is why we are forced to recognize and excite people's emotions. We are creating problems for the society because of our impotency in this area.

[JANSATTA] What kind of results of the vidhan sabha elections do you foresee?

[Shekhar] The results will be confusing. There is no indication of getting clear directions because we have the mentality of ignoring the fundamental problems. The country must, at some point, focus on these fundamental problems. If we do not prepare ourselves for it, the time will force us to do so. Religion is the ladder to reach God; it is not the ladder to reach the Lok Sabha or vidhan sabhas. There will be deleterious results of such practices.

The BJP will not get same endorsement in Uttar Pradesh as the last time. You can form a government on the basis of religion, but you cannot run the government with it. The nation cannot be managed this way.

* Shiv Sena Said Contesting 600 Seats

94AS0061C Madras THE HINDU in English 18 Oct 93 p 1

[Text] Bombay, Oct. 17—The Shiv Sena has taken an unexpected but unilateral step to contest as many as 600 Assembly constituencies in U.P. [Uttar Pradesh], MP [Madhya Pradesh], Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi, much to the consternation of its electoral ally in Maharashtra, the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP].

However, the BJP has officially remained silent though there are signs that it is rattled by this move which is in keeping with the naverick style of Mr. Bal Thackeray who has made the party appear more strident than the BJP in advocating Hindutva.

There is some explanation for Mr. Thackeray's move, sources in the Shiv Sena say, to face the elections in areas where it has less than notional presence though the claims are made that these States have the party apparatus. If so, they are of a kind and not in the least a well-oiled poll machinery.

Mr. Thackeray apparently is irked that the BJP did not even discuss the electoral plans of the party with him and instead had been treating the Sena as though it did not count outside Maharashtra. In fact, there are doubts about the Sena's electoral credibility now outside of Bombay and the regions around it.

In all probability, Shiv Sena's intention to contest the polls outside Maharashtra may have been scented by the Sangh Parivar. Mr. Ashok Singhal, VHP leader, had actually ridiculed the Sena's claims of having helped demolish the structure at Ayodhya on December 6.

With least prodding, Mr. Singhal had told correspondents recently at Nagpur that on that day, at Ayodhya, the Sena cadres had not even arrived in time for the rally. "The rooms assigned to them were not even occupied till 10 a.m. that day." He debunked the CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] claim that he had met Mr. Thackeray "to conspire with him to demolish" the structure.

"All that was said between us—Mr. Thackeray and I—when we met in November last was that the Shiv Sena cadres could come to Ayodhya for the December 6 Kar Seva as kar sevaks and not Shiv Sainiks and that they would have to be amenable to the discipline of the organisers there," Mr. Singhal said.

If the Sena's intention to contest polls were known to him before the announcement then it would appear that Mr. Singhal was trying to take the steam out of the Sena for its possible claim of being more Hindu than the BJP. But the Sena itself does not appear inclined to contest the polls on the religion platform.

Mr. Thackeray has reportedly cautioned Mr. Moreshwar Save, the lone Sena MP, who has been asked to handle election work in the North, that no speeches be made that would attract the scope of election laws that prohibit the use of such a platform, with the party having already had quite a few of its representatives unseated on the same grounds in Maharashtra.

Some within the BJP are inclined to acknowledge that this could be a long-term ruse of Mr. Thackeray to increase his bargaining clout with the BJP for the next round of polls in Maharashtra whenever they are held. This is also seen as needless pressure tactics.

Outlook

* Kanshi Ram, Mulayam Singh Said 'Soft' Towards Congress

93AS1033B Calcutta SUNDAY in English 10 Jul 93 pp 14-15

[Article by Sarat Chandra: "Playing Safe"]

[Text] The soft-pedalling on the Congress by both the Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Mulayam Singh Yadav and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Kanshi Ram has led to the raising of many an eyebrow once again.

What seems to be even more interesting is the fact that while Mulayam is playing soft towards Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, the otherwise brazen BSP leader has been praising the human resources development minister, Arjun Singh. However, despite going divergent ways, the two leaders are absolutely confident of not allowing anything to come in their way of carrying SP-BSP electoral alliance smoothly in Uttar Pradesh.

The two leaders appeared together at a meet the press programme in Lucknow and despite all their assertions about their "perfect coordination" in matters relating to seat adjustments, etc., they made no bones about how one was diametrically opposite to the other even on a subject such as Harshad Mehta's allegation against Rao.

The BSP chief only parried queries relating to these allegations. And obviously to avoid any direct controversy on the issue, he chose to laugh it off by remarking, "Who could be better than Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to lead the Congress to doom?" He went on to add, "It was best to let Narasimha Rao continue as Prime Minister for he alone could hasten the burial of the Congress, which is already dead."

Instead of giving straight replies to queries with respect to the Prime Minister's alleged involvement in the multi-crore securities scam, he simply preferred to beat around the bush by terming the joint parliamentary committee (JPC) as a meaningless body, since it included mostly members of the Congress. He expressed grave doubts whether the JPC would be able to bring out the real truth behind the whole affair.

Yet, in the same vein, he went on to praise Rao's chief adversary within the Congress—Arjun Singh. Describing Singh as a better man than many other Congressmen, Kanshi Ram maintained that he did have a soft corner for the human resources minister simply because "he had the courage to speak out against the Bharatiya Janata Party."

On being quizzed further, Kanshi Ram did not hesitate to admit that there was yet another important factor for his admiration of Arjun Singh, who was as die-hard as enemy of the Shukla brothers from MP—Shyama Charan and Vidya Charan Shukla—as he himself. Interestingly, the rivalry between Arjun Singh and the Shukla brothers had its roots in Chhattisgarh, where Kanshi Ram has now begun to emerge as the third force.

According to the BSP supremo, the Shukla brothers were at the helm of a feudal and caste war perpetrated against Harijans and backwards in Chhattisgarh. "But what really provoked me to sound the death knell against Congress rajahs from Chhattisgarh which they claim as their bastion, was the rape of half a dozen Harijan and OBC girls in the district recently." It was the consequence of this battle cry against the Congress that Prime Minister Rao invited him over for talks in new Delhi where he was assured that the Shukla brothers "would be taken care of."

It is evident that even as Mulayam Yadav and Kanshi Ram swear to put up a joint front against the BJP and the Congress, there is much more than what meets the eye. Mulayam's latest utterances do not seem to indicate that he is in any serious mood to go to war with Prime Minister Narasimha Rao.

Presiding over the meeting of the Samajwadi Party national office-bearers in Lucknow shortly after his closed-door meeting with the BSP chief, Mulayam even went to the extent of echoing the popular Congress sentiment that "the charges against the Prime Minister were trumped up by Harshad Mehta at the instance of the BJP." He added, "Persons like Harshad Mehta who made such allegations of having bribed the Prime Minister with Rs 1 crore, should not be spared."

Later, the meeting formally resolved to urge the central government to award deterrent punishment to Harshad, who was termed as the prime accused in the stock scam. Speaking on behalf of Mulayam, his party's national secretary-general Kapil Deo Singh said that another resolution passed at the day's meeting accused Mehta of being hand-in-glove with the BJP. The resolution accuses the security scam kingpin, Mehta, of having allegedly payed "crores of rupees to the BJP to get the Babri Masjid pulled down, with a view to diverting the attention of the government and the people from his multi-thousand-crore racket." The resolution further attributes motives to the alleged disclosures by Mehta against the Prime Minister on the very eve of the Bangalore session of the BJP.

All that Mulayam's Samajwadi Party could muster up courage to speak about Rao was to urge the Prime Minister to appear before the JPC. And increasingly, unlike Kanshi Ram, his compatriot, Mulayam Singh has nothing against the functioning of the JPC.

Participants at this meeting included the West Bengal Samajwadi Party chief Kiranmoy Nanda, who is also a minister in Jyoti Basu's Cabinet, the Andhra Pradesh unit chief Bipin Chandra Bal and the party's Madhya Pradesh president, Kailash Chandra Jain, besides a host of leaders from Uttar Pradesh.

The meeting resolved to explore the possibility of a political alliance with the left parties, so that a more formidable front could be put up against the BJP.

Kanshi Ram, however, is the least keen on having a pact with any other political party. He is confident that the BSP-SP duo would be able to take on the BJP in a straight electoral battle in Uttar Pradesh. "I am neither interested

in any alliance with V.P. Singh nor with Ajit Singh or Chandra Shekhar, for I am least impressed by the track record of any one of them," he contends. About V.P. Singh, he however goes on to add, "I do not hold so much against him as Mulayam Singh, but still I regard this former Prime Minister as the chief promoter of the BJP."

Significantly, Kanshi Ram also did not hesitate to convey how he regarded the BSP as superior to its political ally, SP. Analysing at length the real strength of his party on the basis of the last election results, he remarked: "Considering the fact that the BSP stood at the number two position (it bagged only 12) in 137 state Assembly seats of which 112 went to the BJP, it would not be difficult for the BSP-SP duo to together win all these seats at the next elections." According to him, "even if SP got only one-third of the votes it had polled at the last election in these seats, the BSP-SP combine would be able to leave the BJP far behind this time."

Knowing Mulayam's weakness, for the chief ministership of the state, Kanshi Ram went on to clarify that once the battle was won in UP, he would hand over the reins to Mulayam together with his own team of winners. But, can that bait alone keep the 'wedlock' going, is what political observers seem to be puzzled about.

* Uttar Pradesh: Electoral Adjustments, Pacts Viewed

93AS1118J Bangalore DECCAN HERALD in English 28 Jul 93 p 8

[Article by M. Hasan: "Mulayam and Kanshi Play a Clever Game"]

[Text] Lucknow—The Mullayam Singh-Kanshi Ram combine, by deciding to abstain from voting on the no-confidence motion against the Narasimha Rao Government, has deftly played its cards to keep the ruling party at the Center in good humor and, at the same time, maintain a distance so as to avoid the BJP's accusation of "hobnobbing with the corrupt Congress (I)".

Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav knows how to play his cards and be in the limelight. The six votes (three each of Mr Mulayam's Samajwadi Party and Mr Kanshi Ram's BSP are crucial when the Congress has been striving hard to win over the smaller parties for survival. However, the decision of the combine has raised many eyebrows within the combine over its long-term political fallout on the alliance.

What is interesting is that Mr Yadav forced Mr Kanshi Ram to fall in line despite his deep hatred for the Congress. But Mulayam knows that any political uncertainty at the Center would cloud his future in Uttar Pradesh, where he has been desperately trying to trounce the BJP. The combine also did not want to give the wrong signal at this juncture by voting against the Rao Government when there are moves to have a broader alliance of secular forces against communalism.

But political observers here feel that the decision to stay away from the voting is an enigma because it is not in keeping with Mulayam's recent outburst against the Congress. He has even dubbed the Congress as "mother of corruption" and "a mere change of leaders will not help, we must root out the Congress (I)", he commented.

For the Public

But it is believed that such carping comments are for public consumption so that the main rival, the BJP, could not bracket the alliance with the Congress at the present juncture. Mulayam presumably did not want to give any leeway to the BJP by supporting a no-trust motion sponsored by it.

The decision has annoyed the Left Front with which Mulayam is in close contact but by distancing the alliance from the move, he has once again demonstrated his deep distrust of the Janata Dal, which has of late created lot of problems for it in the state. Although the V.P. Singh-led *Nyaya yatra* has failed to generate any popular response, the wily Raja of Manda has succeeded in weaning away a section of backwards from SP-BSP combine, Mulayam is angry with Mr V.P. Singh because the latter instead of fighting the communal forces in the State has made him the prime target of attack.

By keeping his block in the Lok Sabha from voting, he has given ample indication that the alliance was against a mid-term poll at present as it would upset his applecart. Any eventuality leading to a snap poll would shift the focus from local and regional issues to the national and that would not be in the interest of the alliance whose sole aim is to come to power in UP. But at the same time he also does not want to be seen as supporter of the Center.

This was also necessary due to the Muslims' antipathy towards the Congress. The community is solidly behind the alliance. But Mulayam's sole aim was to defeat the BJP's designs in the Lok Sabha. His hatred for the BJP was evident at the time of mayoral election in Lucknow, when he not only withdrew his nominee from the contest in favor of the Congress candidate but also persuaded a rebel Congress leader to withdraw from the election. The official Congress candidate won the mayoral election.

He had also extended support to Chandraswami's *Som Yagna* to browbeat the BJP-VHP on its temple card, but he was later disenchanated with the godman when he demanded that the construction of the Ram temple should begin from *garbha griha* (the demolished site of the Babri Mosque). In his defense of the mosque he even lost power in 1991 when he was swept away by the tide of *Hindutva* forces.

The BJP has severely criticized Mr Yadav for "aligning with the Congress". The State unit chief, Mr Kalraj Mishra, said that "Yadav cannot avoid the charge of indirectly helping the Congress on the corrupption issue". The BJP will certainly try to capitalize on it during the campaign. Mr Yadav has, however, now realized that the alliance alone would not be able to steer through successfully in the forthcoming Assembly elections.

Meeting With PVN

Mr Yadav and Mr Kanshi Ram are reported to have met Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to discuss the electoral adjustment. Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar's

recent comments about the UP Congress has also mellowed the State leaders and they are favorably inclined to have an electoral pact.

The positive result of Mr Yadav's meeting with Mr Rao will only be reflected in Mr Yadav's ongoing campaign in the State. The chances of unity among the Janata Dal factions in UP are bleak with the uncompromising stand taken by Mr Ajit Singh and Mr V. P. Singh. Recently Mr Ajit Singh had also sent feelers to Mr Yadav. However, there has been no progress so far in this direction. Mr Ajit Singh is ready to forgive and forget his old feud with Mr Yadav. But the main problem is the leadership issue on which the latter is adamant. The Congress, because of its poor position, may agree to give a major chunk to the SP.

Although efforts are underway to have an alliance of secular parties to stop the BJP from coming to power, it is still an uphill task. The forces of *Hindutva* are active again in the State to rouse communal passions.

Still, despite the best efforts made by the Governor, Mr. Motilal Vora, to restore communal harmony and generate confidence among the people, the divide is total especially in the urban areas. The BJP would naturally try to cash in on this. The BJP, in its conclaave, has admitted that its main fight is with the SP- BSP combine but the party is confident that the two-party aliiance would not be effective. The BJP hopes to win at least 280-300 seats out of 425 seats. This may be an exaggeration but the BJP still has an upper hand and only a combined Opposition may prevent a BJP landslide or even defeat it at the hustings.

* Squabbles Arise Amongst 'Secular Front' Leaders in UP

93AS1094C Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 31 Jul 93 p 9

[Article by Mohan Sahay: "V.P.-Malayam Tussle Threatens U.P. Opposition Unity"]

[Text] Lucknow, August 1.—The invective being used by Mr V. P. Singh and Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav against each other has left many wondering whether there could ever be a common front against the BJP in the State. The conduct of six Lok Sabha members, three each belonging to the Samajwasdi party and Bahujan Samaj Party, during last week's vote on the no-trust motion against the Narasimha Rao Government appears to have widened the rift between the various factions of the undivided Janata Dal.

Mr Singh was quick to point out that by asking its members in the Lok Sabha to abstain from taking part in the no-trust motion, the Mulayam-Kanshi combine had in effect helped the corrupt regime of Mr Narasimha Rao. Mr Singh's observations came at a meeting here last Friday in which the Janata Dal leader accused Mr Yadav of sabotaging the cause of Opposition unity. One should not be surprised if Mr Yadav and Mr Kanshi Ram turned out to be stooges of the Congress(I), some prominent Janata Dal leaders here commented.

In retaliation, Mr Yadav hit out at Mr Singh by questioning his credentials as the champion of the backwards and dalits. Since when had Mr V. P. Singh become the messiah of the backwards, Mr Yadav asked at the meeting on Saturday. He accused Mr V. P. Singh of killing scores of backwards in the name of anti-dacoit operations in Uttar Pradesh while Mr Singh was the Chief Minister. Hundreds of Nishads—a backward community to which the notorious dacoit Phoolan Devi belongs—were killed by the police in "fake encounters" in Uttar Pradesh during Mr Singh's tenure, he alleged.

Mr Ajit Singh's views on Mr Yadav are already known. This puts in the cold storage the efforts being made by the CPI(M) leader and the West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr Jyoti Basu, to forge a secular front to defeat the Hindutva forces led by the BJP in Uttar Pradesh and in the rest of the country in the next elections.

In the emerging trend it seems that the Congress(I) leadership is all set to woo regional leaders even at the cost of the Congress(I). It is Mulayam Singh Yadav in Uttar Pradesh and Mr Biju Patnaik in Orissa. The Bihar Chief Minister, Mr Laloo Yadav, too, is willing to extend a helping hand to Mr Narasimha Rao.

* Political Maneuvering in Uttar Pradesh Intensifying

93LA0189A Madras FRONTLINE in English 27 Aug 93 pp 31-33

[Article by Venkitesh Ramakrishnan: "Charting the Course: Parties Launch Election Games in Uttar Pradesh"]

[Text] A countdown of sorts has begun for elections to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly. Though the election process has not been formally set in motion, all the political forces in the State have started gearing themselves up for the battle, which in all probability will take place in the second week of November. The effort now is to build up electioneering platforms on which the prominent parties expect to launch their campaign. Indications are that this campaign will start in the third week of September.

Three things stand out in the State's political scene today: one, the efforts of the Congress(I), decimated in the last elections and shaken up by the political development of the past two years, to retrieve at least a part of its following; two, the moves of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to strike a balance between its overtly communal agenda (based on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue) and its need to appeal to a larger section of the population by taking up non-religious, social, political questions; three, the re-emergence of unity efforts as well as ego clashes among centrist Opposition forces like the Janata Dal(B), the Samajwadi Party- Bahujan Samaj Party combine, and the Janata Dal(A).

The Congress(I) seems to have abandoned one of its traditional vote banks, the Muslims. After the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, the party and the Central Government have failed to come up with anything to reassure this community. Simultaneously, there are efforts to recapture other traditional vote banks. However, the attempts are characterized by a refusal to learn lessons from past events.

On the one hand, it is trying to appease "upper caste" Hindu sentiment by attempting to snatch the initiative from the BJP on the Ram temple issue, resorting to such tactics as holding a Som Yagna. On the other hand, attempts are being made to placate the Dalits and the Scheduled Castes by distributing largesse to them in the name of poverty alleviation programs. U.P., now under President's rule, has in the past four months made "a quantum jump in implementing poverty alleviation programs" such as the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP) and the 20-point program.

Despite this, Congress(I) leaders have been receiving complaints from the districts and other centers that not enough is being done. Many leaders have been trying to raise the issue of development to strengthen the party's case. But Congress(I) insiders say the ground-level reaction has not been favorable, especially given the rise in prices of essential commodities, erratic power supply for agriculture and absence of incentives for farmers.

A large section has now come to realize that the Central Government's new economic policy will cost the party more than it had anticipated. Faced with the daunting task of reviving the party's prospects, many of them see the direct link between the watering-down of poverty alleviation and rural development programs and the new economic policy. As a result, party stalwarts such as N.D. Tiwari have openly called for "added thinking on the new economic policy".

Complaints from a section of the State leadership had also reached leaders at the Center. In this context, senior Congress(I) leader and Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar suggested that the party not contest the next elections and instead support other secular parties depending upon the chances of each party in various constituencies. Arjun Singh supportd Pawar on this. However, Pawar retracted his statement when the State leadership showed its disapproval.

Another move is to place officers favorable to the Congress(I) in key posts in the State headquarters and the districts. The unanimous opinion of Opposition leaders in the State is that the services of Governor Motilal Vora have come in handy for the Congress(I) in this. In a shake-up of the administration, in two months the Governor has shifted about 550 IAS officers, more than one-fourth of the force. In a single move, 36 of the 63 district magistrates were changed.

According to former BJP Chief Minister Kalyan Singh, the move is aimed at controlling the election process in the districts according to the whims and fancies of the Congress(I). Communist Party of India (Marxist) State Secretary Ram Sumer Yadav pointed out the the Governor's actions resembled those of a Chief Minister. According to Yadav, the transfers and the Congress(I) dominance in the day-to-day affairs of the administration had demoralized the officers. "What was started during the BJP regime is being completed by the Congress. This will have a negative impact for a long time," he pointed out.

Whatever the Congress(I) justification, it has come in handy for the BJP to launch its campaign on non-religious issues. The party has clubbed the mass transfer question with its propaganda against the "corrupt Central Government". Though this offensive against the Central Government is part of the shift in strategy effected by the national leadership, the State BJP had other compelling reasons to adopt this course of action—the erosion of support from traditional strongholds.

The BJP took serious note of this when Samajwadi Party President Mulayam Singh Yadav made inroads into one of its strongholds, the trading community. Mulayam Singh made a concerted move to wean away certain sections of this community from the BJP in June. This manifested itself in a mammoth reception the Kanpur Udyog-Vyapar Mandal (Chamber of Industry and Commerce) gave him in July. Mulayam Singh's operations on this front were primarily based on the failure of the Kalyan Singh Government to give concessions on sales tax collection. The demand of the trading community was that a portion of the arrears due from them be written off and the collection drive be toned down taking into consideration the financial constraints they faced from season to season.

Though the BJP Government promised this concession, it failed to keep its word. Mulayam Singh capitalized on the trading community's resentment. According to Vyapar Mandal representatives, he promised that the concessions would be given if the Mandal supported him in the next election.

For the SP-BSP combine, the recognition by the Mandal was a major victory, especially because Kanpur has a large number of industries and commercial establishments. The Mandal also wields considerable financial power. Along with this virtual conquest of a BJP stronghold, the SP-BSP combine's efforts to organize a parallel movement of bureaucraats to counter the officers' groups indoctrinated by the BJP had also become a success. These moves made such an impact among the Backward Class and Scheduled Caste bureaucrats that some of them had voluntarily formed core groups that were ready to campaign for the SP-BSP combine.

The cumulative effect of these two triumps achieved by Mulayam Singh was not lost on the BJP. From the second week of July, when it became clear that Mulayam Singh had finally succeeded in taking the Kanpur Vyapar Mandal along with him, the BJP leadership initiated a series of discussions at various levels, culminating in a three-day meeting of the State executive at Kanpur. The thrust of the discussions was that the party had bound itself too long to a single-point agenda, the construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya, which was impeding its efforts to project itself as a force capable of efficiently running the affairs of the State. The discussions highlighted the point that although the Ayodhya campaign had produced major gains in rural areas, it was of no real use in capturing the support of the urban population.

On the basis of this, the State executive formulated a propaganda plan to focus on the issue of corruption in the

light of Harshad Mehta's allegations. This had the blessing of the national leadership, which was trying to adopt the same course. The campaign was kicked off on July 25 with ambitious programs scheduled for the next 50 days and so planned that the advantage gained from the pursuit of religious issues would not be lost. The motifs to be used in the anti-corruption campaign would have religious undertones. The party has asked its workers to ring bells at home for half an hour every morning (purportedly tolling the death knell of the Central Government), and in public meetings moot the idea that corruption has become a way of life because of Western influences, which are contrary to the Hindu way of life.

The attempt is obviously to reap two-fold benefits: to project an image of being concerned with broader social issues than those with communal overtones, and to be able to revert to the Ayodhya issue when the need arises. Going by the present trend, the BJP will do this as the elections approach.

The centrist Opposition parties have also started making their moves. Leaders of the Janata Dal(B), the S.P.-BSP combine and the Janata Dal(A) have been touring their pockets of influence. Efforts are also being made to forge unity among them to counter the BJP's communal propaganda. The Janata Dal(B) came out with the first initiative when former Prime Minister V.P. Singh announced after a moderately successful tour of U.P. that his party was ready to reserve the Chief Minister's post for Mulayam Singh if the elections were fought jointly. At about the same time the Janata Dal(A) and Chandra Shekar's Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP) made strong pleas for strengthening Opposition unity moves. V.P. Singh's annoncement was seen as a good sign. Mulayam Singh also welcomed the announcement, though guardedly. But within 10 days of this announcement, the problems familiar to unity moves cropped up.

The issue this time was the stance taken by the S.P.-BSP combine on the no-confidence motion last month in the Lok Sabha. The party's decision to abstain from voting on the motion, thereby ensuring the Narasimha Rao Government's survival, was severely critized by the other parties. Mulayam Singh's consistent allies in the State, the Left parties, did not accept his enigmatic stance either. The fall-out of this was open verbal duels between other centrist Opposition parties and the S.P.-BSP combine. Things have reached such a pass that Mulayam Singh has announced that unity would be impossible.

But Mulayam Singh's self-centered approach could well be his undoing. Within the S.P.-BSP combine too, his position on the no- confidence motion was questioned by supporters. Abdul Mannan, the advocate who has represented the Babri Masjid Action Committee over the last three decades, said: "It seems as though Mulayam Singh did not give due consideration to the issues raised in the CPI(M)- sponsored motion which laid special emphasis on the Government's criminal inaction in protecting the Babri Masjid."

There are many in the Muslim community, Mulayam Singh's major votebank, who echo these sentiments. But the S.P. leader brushed these aside as not mirroring the feelings of the majority. According to him, the fall of the Central Government would have helped only the BJP.

Notwithstanding these claims, it is clear that the stance *vis-a-vis* the no-confidence motion has adversely affected the support base of the S.P.-BSP combine. According to S.P. insiders, the party would try to get over this setback by stepping up its anti-BJP campaign. How far this will succeed remains to be seen.

According to S.P.-BSP insiders as well as Janata Dal leaders, Mulayam Singh's position on the motion was inspired by a desire to strike an understanding on seat sharing with the Congress(I). They say Mulayam Singh feels that with the formation of the S.P.-BSP combine, he has "taken care of the Backward Class, Scheduled Caste votes" and that what is needed now is a chunk of the "upper caste" votes to forge a winning combination.

"Mulayam's understanding is that a limited seat adjustment with the congress(I) would help him get these 'upper caste' votes", said one Janata Dal leader. The other consideration with him is, apparently, the absence of a contender for the Chief Minister's post from State-level Congress(I) leaders.

Mulayam Singh himself has strongly denied these suggestions that it cannot be denied that he is trying to build up an "upper caste" constituency along with his traditional votebank. It started with the support to the Chandraswami-sponsored Som Yagna and has extended to the roping in of sections of the "upper caste" trading community. In making these efforts, Mulayam Singh has also twisted his political postures according to convenience. Some of his public speeches have referred to the "disputed structure in Ayodhya" in contrast to his fierce defense of the "Babri Masjid" elsewhere.

This rhetoric reflects the Congress(I) position in many respects. Whether these moves would actually culminate in an electoral understanding with the Congress(I) cannot be predicted. But if that happens, Mulayam Singh would definitely lose a large chunk of the Muslim vote.

As things now stand, the chances of centrist-secular-Opposition unity seem as distant a dream as a Congress(I) rejuvenation. The party that stands to gain is the BJP, though it faces difficulties in projecting itself as a respectable and responsible political force. The Left parties seem to have analyzed the situation correctly and are trying to bring about a rapprochement between the S.P.-BSP combine and other centrist parties.

*** Mulayam Singh Seen Only Possibility of Stopping BJP in UP**

94AS0045E Cochin THE WEEK in English
5 Sep 93 pp 32-33

[Article by Debashis Mukerjee: "Man of the Moment"]

[Text] After several months of relative calm, the political atmosphere is gradually warming up again in Uttar Pradesh. Though the passions unleashed by the demolition of the disputed structure in Ayodhya have ebbed, the BJP, still riding the Ayodhya wave, continues to be well ahead of the other parties in the electoral fray.

Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party (SP) appears best poised to put up a good fight against the BJP steamroller, but is unlikely to halt its progress. The Congress is still too preoccupied with infighting to realise that if it does not recoup quickly it runs the risk of staying out of the next assembly altogether. The JD(A), the JD(B) and the Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP) were to have merged weeks ago but hitches continue to arise. "We are confident," said state BJP president Kalraj Mishra. "But I don't want to stress that too much for it may make our partymen complacent. If the opposition unites the fight will be tough. But I doubt there will be any unity."

As the most disciplined and organised of all the parties, the BJP has begun its poll preparations in full earnest. Ticket-seekers have been asked to file their applications—over 600 applicants have been received. "We have been engaged in some programme or other since our government was dismissed," said Rajnath Singh, a member of the state executive. Immediately after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, former chief minister Kalyan Singh hit the road, brazenly taking credit for the 'heroic action', while cadres were mobilised for a confrontation with the Centre. However, after the aborted Boat Club rally, the party pitched its campaign on a lower key.

There also appears to have been an effort to rise above the image of a single-issue party. Throughout June large farmers' rallies were organised all over the state to protest the Dunkel proposals. At present, a major mobilisation drive is on, particularly at the tehsil and pargana levels, to ensure that there is no shortage of volunteers when the polls are held. Numerous workers' meetings at district levels are also being held.

But that the mobilisation drive has not left out well known defectors from other parties has become a source of heartburning to some old partymen. The best known among the defectors are Manager Singh, a former associate of Chandra Shekhar, and Balti Baba, a godman from Deoria earlier associated with the Congress who could produce ladoos from empty buckets.

The only other party to have campaigned tirelessly since President's rule was imposed has been the SP. "With the party having been formed only last November it was essential to build it up as quickly as possible," said Ram Saran Das, SP's state president. Mulayam Singh has held more than 70 meetings all over the state, criticising the BJP, the Congress and V.P. Singh's Janata Dal(B) vociferously.

"The response has been tremendous everywhere," said Das, "showing that the people have seen through the mandir gimmick and are assessing the BJP on its performance while in power. They've realised it was a non-functioning government." However, while stressing that he had protected the disputed structure in Ayodhya unlike Narasimha Rao, Mulayam Singh refuses to commit himself on rebuilding the mosque. "I have always said that the issue should be resolved by negotiations or left to the courts," he declares.

Clearly he believes that the Muslim vote is with him. It is sections of the Hindus he is now wooing. He harps on abolition of sales tax in a bid to win over the traders who are unhappy with the BJP for reneging on its promises. Mulayam Singh has been attending meetings sponsored by the traders' association.

However, two issues have recently thrown Mulayam Singh into a big controversy: his reluctance to forge an electoral understanding with the Dals and his MPs' abstention from voting on the no-confidence motion against the Rao government. The abstention has raised eyebrows among his staunch Muslim supporters too, as they regard Rao as inimical to their interests, like the BJP. Said Das: "The only alternative to Rao would have been the BJP. Do Muslims want the BJP at the Centre? It is a false propaganda that Muslims are upset over this."

However, as a local editor opined, "it is in Mulayam Singh's interest that Rao remains at the Centre. Only then would his Muslim votes remain intact. If Arjun Singh had replaced Rao, Muslims would have shifted allegiance to the Congress because they know that Mulayam Singh is after all only a regional force."

Mulayam Singh has reiterated that he is not averse to an alliance with the JDs and that he is only opposed to a merger, but in practice he has shown no interest in getting close to them. "V.P. Singh is worse as an ally than as an opponent," said Das enigmatically. Indeed the controversy over Mulayam Singh's alleged meeting with Kerala Chief Minister K. Karunakaran seems to suggest that he would rather have the Congress than the JDs as partner. "The problem of course will arise during the distribution of tickets," said the editor. "Mulayam Singh knows that Kanshi Ram will drive a hard bargain. But at least Kanshi Ram will bring in a certain section of the Harijan vote which Mulayam Singh could not have got otherwise. With the Janata Dals he feels their vote base is the same as his and by allying with them he will only be giving them the benefit of the hard work he has been putting in."

But does Mulayam Singh seriously believe that he along with Kanshi Ram can defeat the BJP? In the last election the two parties together won only 50 seats. Ajit Singh believes that Mulayam Singh has his eyes set on the elections following the forthcoming one by which time, Mulayam hopes, the BJP would have disgraced itself in power. The editor has a more credible explanation: "Mulayam Singh does not really expect to defeat the BJP, but he does hope to deny it an absolute majority. Then all the other parties can get together to form the government.

He believes that the second biggest chunk of MLAs will be his and he will be a natural choice as the chief minister."

After a long hibernation the Janata Dals have also woken up. Ajit Singh's flirtation with the Congress appears to be over with the split in his party during the no-confidence motion. He has begun workers' meetings in strategic parts of the state, bitterly criticising the Congress and openly dwelling on how 'suitcases' were used to lure his men away.

Ajit Singh's tactical support to the Congress has also cost him sections of his Jat base, since Jats have traditionally voted against the Congress. The BJP too had made inroads into Jat territory in the last election. "Whatever it may be, the Jats have not forgotten Charan Singh," said Samarpal Singh, president of the Yuva JD(A). "His legacy continues to be our strength."

The JD(B)'s inactivity, brought on largely by V.P. Singh's indisposition, has once more underscored how dependent the party is on an individual. Singh's meetings in eastern UP in June were not very successful, though Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav's delightful speeches did draw some applause. The August 7 meeting in Lucknow was a reasonable success and raised hopes again among the party cadre. But Mulayam Singh's coldness remains a source of bitterness. Said party leader Reoti Raman Singh: "By dividing the votes of the deprived and democratic sections who are opposed to the BJP and the Congress, Mulayam is making a historical blunder. He will be responsible if the BJP comes back to power again."

The greatest beneficiary of the dynamism displayed by Governor Motilal Vora should be the Congress. He has been a startling contrast to his laid-back predecessor B. Satyanaryana Reddy. In less than two months he visited more than half the 63 districts, announcing a string of development programmes and welfare measures, sometimes without ascertaining where the funds were to come from. Subsequently, reports have appeared that many of the schemes still remain on paper.

Vora's large-scale transfers have drawn flak. And Kalyan Singh has chastised him for discontinuing several schemes—like the mini-dairy scheme in 37 districts and the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya employment scheme—started by the BJP government. But certainly Vora's administration has given the impression that it is striving hard. "He's doing his best but the party is in no position to take advantage of it," lamented Ram Kripal Singh, a former state Congress general secretary.

Two issues dominate the current confabulations within the Congress to such an extent that the party has yet to start preparations for the polls. The first relates to the alleged tie-up sought by Karunakaran and a section of the national leadership with Mulayam Singh. "It was tried once in 1991 when we supported Mulayam Singh's government. We know how disastrous it proved. Now do we want to repeat the mistake?" asked Ram Kripal Singh. State president Mahabir Prasad also averred that the party was quite capable of facing the electorate on its own, adding "why don't people concern themselves with their own problems instead of meddling in ours" in an obvious reference to Karunakaran. Indeed the state-level leaders of different factions are all agreed that such an alliance will do no good.

The second preoccupation, of course, remains the perennial problem of factionalism. Once again a move to replace Mahabir Prasad is gathering strength, with the dissidents planning to petition the high command soon.

With its vote-banks in disarray, the Congress seems doomed to self-destruction.

* Political Maneuvering in Uttar Pradesh Recounted

94AS0006 Varanasi AJ in Hindi 9 Sep 93 p 6

[Article by Rajendra Dwivedi: "The Election Process is Intense"]

[Text] The Center had dismissed the BJP government in U.P. on December 6 and established president's rule here. The plan was to improve the Congress image during the president's rule here, however, the image got worse during the initial period. The people in Uttar Pradesh has been so disappointed in the Congress after the communal violence that followed the 6 December falling of structure, that whatever efforts Congress (I) made backfired.

Finally, the Congress (I) members of the state demanded that then-governor Satyanarayan Reddy be removed. The prime minister did not pay serious attention to it in the beginning, however, the local Congressites threatened to cause frays in Amethi where the convention was to be held, and the Center had to become serious about their demands. Finally, after much consideration, they appointed Motilal Vora as governor of Uttar Pradesh. He was the former Madhya Pradesh chief minister and also had served at the Center.

In the beginning, the local Congress (I) people tried to give the same treatment to Vora by saying that he had associated with a specific group, however, all this became quiet later like a storm in a teacup. Mr. Vora's hard work also contributed to his success.

The drought-stricken Congress plant is getting a new life after Motilal Vora took office in Uttar Pradesh, and it is beginning to get its green color back now. The disheartened Congressites appear to be inspired now.

The central government had dismissed the state BJP government after the destruction of the disputed structure in Ayodhya on 6 December, however, the BJP demon was still riding it. Most of the voters clearly had decided that the BJP government will return after the elections.

Time passed and a lot of water has flowed in the rivers in this state. During this time, Samajwadi Party's leader Mulayam Singh Yadav joined forces with Bahujan Samaj Party's leader Kanshi Ram. Mulayam Singh emerged as a challenge after the unity of these two parties. No one can compete with Mulayam Singh when it comes to hard work. He travelled the state extensively and addressed a lot of political rallies.

Governor Vora is not a laggard in extensive travel in the state. He has already toured 45 of the 63 districts in the

state. He has paid three or four visits to some districts, and has also made some important announcements for economic development of the state. Several of his announcements were followed by government directives also. In addition, he is trying to win everyone's heart using his charming personality and interpersonal skills.

Veteran state and national level Congress (I) leader, Narayan Dutt Tiwari, who had become a bit inactive after his wife's death, is going to work for the Congress (I) with full energy now. His slogan will also be development work in the state. Governor Vora is also making the development of the state as the main issue. Both these veteran leaders believe that the Congress (I) can neutralize the communal efforts only by accelerating development projects. Mr. Pramod Tiwari, leader of the Congress legislative groups, who is also the vice chairman of the state planning commission, is focusing on it fully.

In spite of all this, the Congress (I) has failed to reduce, much less end, its own inner conflicts. One faction of the state Congress declared the state Congress chief Mahavir Prasad to be incompetent and demanded his ouster. They argue that it would not be possible for the Congress (I) to cross the Vaitarni [the mythical river between this and the next world] of the next vidhan sabha election if such incompetent leaders remain in power.

A few days ago, a group of former state legislators visited the prime minister in Delhi and tried to caution him about this situation, however, they did not succeed in it. The prime minister had assured them that he would invite some of the former Congress (I) legislators of the state. It is said that this group has the support of Tripathi, the influential and popular leader in the state.

Central cabinet member Arjun Singh, who is not happy with the prime minister, also has his eyes on Uttar Pradesh. He knows that he cannot make any major changes in national politics without Uttar Pradesh' support. He toured Uttar Pradesh keeping this in mind and tried to create a support lobby for himself. It appears that he is getting some support from Lokpati Tripathi.

The BJP is taking the upcoming elections very seriously. It is fully convinced that the Ram wave' is still active here and the name of Ram will help it cross the Vaitarni. Still, the BJP is not suffering from overconfidence. It is just focusing fully on its efforts.

They have tried to enhance the position of Kalyan Singh, the former chief minister of the state, by promoting him as the national vice chairman. He was then asked to tour the whole state. Kalyan Singh is also leading one of the four public awareness tours' that are being organized now. This tour will start from Calcutta on 11 September and will stay in West Bengal and Bihar for one and a half day each. Later, it will enter Uttar Pradesh and will spend more time there. It will reach Bhopal on 25 September.

A exhaustive program has been planned for this U.P. trip. To make it successful, about 100 side-tours will be arranged in the state. All this side-tours will join the main tour at specific hub points.

According the BJP sources, Kalyan Singh will make his old political rival Mulayam Singh's election district Itawa a focal point of this tour. They are consulting extensively for this visit.

The BJP has also raised funds for the election. Of course, funds for the elections will be collected as usual, they have also an innovative approach to raise money. In the past, all prospective candidates had to get recommendation from the district he/she wanted to represent. This system has been discarded now. Anyone can now apply for candidacy without any recommendation. The application fee is 1,100 rupees. Of it, 101 rupees will be given to The KAMAL JYOTI magazine.

The BJP sources estimate that at least 12,000 applications for candidacy will be submitted because of the Ram wave' in the state. Thus, it will be able to collect over 12 million rupees for election expenses easily.

Mulayam Singh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party is also very serious about the upcoming election. It is said that a person "who gets burned drinking hot milk, drinks even buttermilk by blowing at it." This is true for Mulayam Singh. He wants to use every formula that will help it win the election. At the same time, he wants to make sure that there is no one to challenge his leadership, at least in his own party, if he gets the opportunity to form his party's government.

Mr. Yadav, after much deliberation, has decided to cooperate with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). He believes that there are enough voters in his and Kanshi Ram's election districts to easily win the election. The second fact is that, except for Kanshi Ram, no one in the BSP has even one percent of his charisma. Since Kanshi Ram has his eyes set on the Center, he is not expected to interfere in the state. Mr. Kanshi Ram has also declared Mulayam Singh the undisputed chief minister of the state.

As said earlier, Mulayam Singh has no peer when it comes to hard work. When he was the chief minister, he did not pay much attention to public relations. He is very much aware of its need now. Even the BJP and the Congress (I) are not as active in propaganda work as is Mulayam Singh. The Janata Dal and the left wing parties do not come even close.

Politically, Mulayam Singh's situation is most promising now. The opposition parties are looking to him for forming coalitions, and Mulayam Singh does not even pay attention to them. Recently, Communist Party of India's Harkishan Singh Surjit and Inderjit Gupta of the Communist Party (M) visited him in Lucknow for the purpose of forming a coalition of non-BJP and non-Congress parties. Both these leaders talked with Mulayam Singh in privacy at his home for one and half hour. Their goal was to convince Mulayam Singh to talk with V.P. Singh. However, Mulayam Singh did not agree.

It is not the case that Mulayam Singh is opposed to unity of the opposition. He wants the agreement according to his own conditions. He does not want any kind of argument over the leadership if the opportunity to form a cabinet

shows up after the elections. He has had a bitter experience in this area. In 1989, when the Janata Dal was victorious, there was the question of leadership. Even though Mulayam Singh had become the chief minister, the seeds of discord within the Janata Dal were also sown on the same day. One faction of the Janata Dal had raised strong slogans against Mulayam Singh. He has not forgotten that episode even today.

Mulayam Singh is especially focusing on students, businessmen, and the minorities. The Janata Dal (Ajit) and Janata Dal (Bommai) are also testing their strength. The Ajit group has recently received the shock of the defeat of no-confidence motion against the central government. It did not, however, effect U.P. much. He still has some influence in the Jat-majority region of western Uttar Pradesh.

The Janata Dal (B) is trying to attract the voters using the Mandal Commission as an issue. V.P. Singh, the raja of Manda, is making all kind of statements almost daily about it. He has gone as far as to announce relinquishing even Delhi in order to get Mandal Commission recommendations implemented. He still believes that Mandal supporters will stay loyal to his party in this campaign. At the same time, V.P. Singh also wants to get cooperation from the Samajwadi Party so that the voters are not divided. However, Mulayam Singh is wary of Manda's raja. Mulayam Singh himself said while answering a question that one must be careful of a person who tries to aim four targets with one arrow.

The raja is still not popular with the journalists. However, Kunwar Rewati Raman Singh of this party is very popular among his supporters and other groups because of his nice manners, simple nature, and serene personality.

The left-wing parties do not have much influence in Uttar Pradesh. They are looking for a crutch that could help increase the number of their seats. To this end, sometimes they talk about forming a coalition, other time they extend their hand toward V.P. Singh or smile at Mulayam Singh.

The process of setting up the election equation is accelerating now. There are talks about Congress (I) being interested in cooperating with Mulayam Singh.

All in all the situation is this: The Congress (I) and all non-BJP parties are trying to make sure that somehow they succeed in stopping the BJP from forming the government.

* Battle in Uttar Pradesh Seen Intensifying

94AS0046F Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 5 Oct 93 p 10

[Article by Raj Saran Varma]

[Text] Lucknow, October 4—With the December 6 incidents of Ayodhya still not erased from public memory, the forthcoming assembly election in U.P. has assumed special significance.

"It will be a mini-Mahabharat," predicts the BJP national vice-president and former UP chief minister, Kalyan Singh. His predecessor, Mulayam Singh Yadav is confident that elections would prove to be "a death nail in the coffin of communalism."

The Janata Dal leader and former Prime Minister, Mr V.P. Singh, sees the elections as a "beginning of a lambi daud (long race), irrespective of who comes to power." For the state's despondent Congressmen, "it may well be the beginning of the end."

With Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav staying away from the Janata Dal unity moves, the electoral contests in most places is expected to be multi-cornered. Though this has helped the Congress in the past, this time it might work to the advantage of the BJP considering the party had polled 33 per cent of the votes during the 1991 elections.

In fact, the Congress, which could secure only 47 seats in the dissolved assembly—the party's lowest tally in UP—will be lucky to survive as a political force in the state.

The principal combatants in this "Mahabharat" would then be Mr Kalyan Singh during whose regime the disputed Ayodhya structure was demolished and the Samajwadi Party chief, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, who firmly stood in between the frenzied kar sewaks and the disputed structure in 1990.

Mr Yadav has this time teamed up with the BSP supremo, Mr Kanshi Ram, and disdainfully repulsed the Left bid to bring him nearer the V.P. Singh-Chandra Shekhar-Ajit Singh axis, another of the key players in the state. "We don't need netas who start bickering the moment they come to power," Mr Yadav says.

The forthcoming elections is extremely important for the Janata Dal leader, Mr V.P. Singh, though he himself is not contesting. A clear Mulayam victory implies erosion of the Mandal constituency Mr Singh had built assiduously among the scheduled castes, backwards and Muslims.

As the Raja of Manda himself puts it: "Our primary political objective is to consolidate the National Front-Left Front as the third force in Indian politics."

For the Jat leader from western UP, Mr Ajit Singh, these elections may prove to be the last chance to salvage the political legacy of his father, Mr Charan Singh. The public response at Mr Kalyan Singh's rally in Baghpat—Mr Charan Singh's home constituency—is sure to have unnerved Mr Ajit Singh.

A nexus between Mr V.P. Singh and Mr Chandra Skekhar might make things difficult for not only the BJP but for the Mulayam-led SP-BSP alliance too. In this backward dominated region, with pockets of Muslim concentration, Mr Singh has evoked a good response.

In the Yadav-dominated Chandauli as well as backward classes and scheduled tribes dominated Robertsganj and Mirzapur, Mr Singh's Janata Dal had won a good chunk of seats in 1991 poll. Despite the efforts of the UPCC chief, Mr Mahabir Prasad, and the Union food minister, Mr Kalpnath Rai, to regain lost ground for the party, the Congress does not seem to have much base left in this region.

In Uttranchal, the main contests will be between the BJP and the Congress, as neither Mr Yadav nor Mr Singh have been able to make much dent in this area. The stranglehold of the Congress party in the UP hills was broken in the

1991 elections when the BJP won 15 of the 18 assembly seats in the dissolved assembly.

Primarily because the BJP hi-jacked the Uttarakhand movement from its original proponents, the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (UKD), UKD did not win even one seat in the last elections. The BJP, on their part, had adopted in the dissolved assembly a resolution for a separate Uttarakhand state and recommended it to the Centre.

The left parties too have lost their credibility in the hills as they have rejected the GNLF demand for a separate Gorkhaland.

Bundelkhand is also an important region. Though the BJP had wrested all the four parliamentary seats earlier, its stock now may not be that high. The move by Mr V.P. Singh to offer an assembly ticket to the dreaded dacoit queen, Phoolan Devi, for Jalaun in the coming elections, has added another dimension to politics in this region.

Bundelkhand, comprising Jalaun, Lalitpur, Banda and Jhansi areas, has seen a number of dacoits in the poll fray. Bundelkhand is known for the excesses of its feudal lords whose despotism has frequently led to various backwards and lower caste movements besides giving birth to dacoits.

The BSP, in fact, has a large following among the backwards consisting of Lodhs, Kurmis and Jatavs. While the communists have an upper hand in Banda, as of today the BSP is holding sway over the other areas.

The two most important assembly constituencies are Jaswant Nagar in Etawah, from where Mr Mulayam Singh contests and Mr Kalyan Singh's home constituency Atrauli in Aligarh. In Sitapur, former BJP minister, Mr Rajendra Gupta, might face a stiff challenge.

Politically more stiff battles will, however, be fought in Faizabad and surrounding districts of central and east UP, which were in the thick of the Ayodhya imbroglio.

The most significant poll out of these would be fought in the Panchar belt of Etawah-Mainpuri-Etawah-Farrukhabad districts. The people of the area, traditionally pro-Mulayam Singh, have of late shown an inclination towards BJP which won three of the five Etawah assembly constituencies in the 1991 elections.

It remains to be seen if projecting Mr Kalyan Singh as a backward leader will increase the party's hold in the region where scheduled castes and backwards account for nearly 60 per cent of the electorate.

* Janadesh Yatra Said to Demoralize Congress, Janata Dal Factions

94AS0062G New Delhi ORGANISER in English 10 Oct 93 p 10

[Text] Etawah (UP)—Udi is the small last township situated between the two turbulent rivers, Yamuna and Chambal, before one crosses into Madhya Pradesh. Barely a few days ago the former Prime Minister and Janata Dal senior V.P. Singh passed through the chiefly Thakur-dominated town but not even a hundred souls turned up to greet him. But the last Tuesday presented a contrast as the entire population of the township came out on its streets, with garlands and guns in the hands, to accord a spectacular ovation to Kalyan Singh's Janadesh Yatra, before it made its way into Bhind district of Madhya Pradesh. The BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] leader had to alight from his car, amidst the strain of bands, slogans of Jai Shree Ram and gunshots, the traditional way of welcome by Chambal people, known for their bravery and fortitude.

On the UP [Uttar Pradesh] side of the Chambal bridge, Mulayam Singh Yadav had got constructed a Mulayam Deewar (wall) to stop incoming Karsevaks on their way to Ayodhya from MP and other states far south, in October 1990. But the wall gave in no time before the thrust of thousands of Karsevaks. Heavy lathi-charge and firing could not prevent its demolition. The Janadesh Yatra pulverised the bastion of Mulayam Singh in his home district, much to his concern.

In Jaswantnagar, Mulayam's home constituency, where terror used to be writ on the faces of his political rivals, womenfolk came out in large numbers to offer arati and garlands to Kalyan Singh. The public meeting at the Government Inter College ground in Etawah was one of the largest seen in the town in recent years, although he could reach the venue over four hours behind schedule, covering the 175 km. from Mathura in ten hours. But people, who came from far and near, preferred to wait and thousands remained there even after Kalyan Singh had finished his hour-long speech. The BJP's saffron flag fluttered all over, on the house tops, electric poles or tractor trollies, motor cycles or bicycles. "Kalyan storms Mulayam bastion," flashed the general headlines in the dailies next day.

And to Mulayam's chagrin, several of his one-time pals joined the BJP in Etawah and other western U.P. districts. One of them was Subhash Yadav from Karhal in Mainpuri, close to Jaswantnagar. It was Subhash's father, Nathu Singh Yadav, who had launched Mulayam Singh in politics, but was ditched in turn later. As many as 40 village Pradhans of the area, all former supporters of Mulayam Singh Yadav, joined the BJP. Another leader to part company with Mulayam in Etawah was Mahendra Singh Yadav, an influential leader. In Firozabad, Shashibala Rajput, national general secretary of the Yuva Janata Dal, joined the BJP. Ram Karan Yadav, who came to the Etawah meeting, was enraged when asked by the ORGANISER whether he was a Mulayam Singh supporter, being a Yadav.

"Sahab, are we Ram Drohi? Mulayam Singh may oppose Ram temple construction, but many Yadavs who had gone for Karseva in Ayodhya were killed in police firing. If he comes to power, he will help rebuild Babri mosque and not the temple."

The Janadesh Yatra, in less than a week's travel through Uttar Pradesh, covered as much as 1500 km., touching 22 Lok Sabha constituencies and 126 assembly constituencies, in as many as 17 districts. Kalyan Singh addressed as many as 122 big meetings, spanning from east to west, demonstrating the juggernaut of the saffron would make a mincemeat of the opposition. Whether it was Mulayam Singh's bastion in Etawah, or Gandhi family's stronghold of Amethi-Rae-Bareli. BJP provided an inkling of its

spread, deep and wide all over. That led the usually anti-BJP 'Pioneer' to observe that in U.P. the party would romp home with larger majority than in 1991. The tornado of the Yatra has been an eye-opener for the political pundits and wishful thinkers who thought that BJP could not make the grade since Ram temple issue had lost its wide appeal to be relevant for the second time. BJP can safely depend upon its opponents to keep the Ram temple issue alive, as also of the Hindutva, for a considerable period to its advantage.

Aware that the CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation], under yet another foolish instruction from Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, has planned to book senior BJP leaders before the elections on Ayodhya demolition issue, Kalyan Singh told frenzied masses that he may be put behind bars any day. As the Yatra demonstrated in U.P., such an act would only make BJP's task much easier in the November elections. The Congress-I would thus be wiped out in U.P. for good. But, in quest of Muslim votes the party can commit yet another faux pas. CBI sleuths are enquiring from people in Ayodhya and Lucknow, whether Kalyan Singh and his ministerial colleagues had taken a vow before Ramalalla, after their swearing-in on June 25, 1991, that they would construct a temple by demolishing the mosque. "There was a plan for the demolition of the structure on December 6. And the only one to know that was Vidhata (Almighty). None else could have planned to raze such a huge structure in mere five hours." Kalyan Singh told people amidst thunderous applause. "You have done Karseva to demolish the over-400-year-old structure. Now work towards demolition of the 108-year-old Congress in the coming elections, was his advice!

Apart from very large turnouts of women and youths, in particular from the backward classes and other sections, Muslims in fair chunk were discernible in the meetings and wayside receptions, which belied the impression that they are keeping a safe distance from BJP, or are scared of it. In fact, in none of the sensitive districts through which the Yatra passed, any prohibitory order had to be imposed. That the Janadesh Yatra would put UP on fire, which would have been to the liking of the pseudo-secularists, did not happen, much to their disappointment. The Yatra and the National Executive meeting of the BJP in Lucknow, on October 1-3, shall further sharpen the cutting edge of the BJP thrust in Uttar Pradesh in the coming two months.

* Seat Adjustments Between Mulayam Singh, Janata Dal Possible

94AS0046A Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 11 Oct 93 p 9

[Text] New Delhi, Oct. 9—The leader of the Samajwadi Party, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, today hinted at the possibility of last-minute seat adjustments with the "unified" Janata Dal for the forthcoming elections in Uttar Pradesh.

He, however, said the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party combine was capable of defeating the BJP without any help from outside.

Mr Yadav conceded that he had met the Bihar Chief Minister, Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav, to discuss the seat adjustment issue, but refused to reveal anything further about the ongoing talks. He avoided all queries on the issue saying that they had decided not to reveal the issues discussed at the meeting till a final decision was taken.

The former Chief Minister, however, criticized the "unified" Janata Dal's attempts to portray him as the sole hurdle in defeating the BJP and the Congress(I) in Uttar Pradesh. Mr Yadav said the Janata Dal leaders were claiming complete control of the situation in the State and levelling allegations against him at the same time.

Mr Yadav emphasized that the Samajwadi Party was not making any effort to torpedo the attempts of the non-BJP and non-Congress(I) parties to unite. He said the "unified" Janata Dal was already facing internal bickerings. He said, "Let us see whether they will really manage to settle the feud regarding the symbol before the elections.

Although Mr Yadav clarified that his party was going to contest the elections with an anti-BJP and anti-Congress(I) stand, he refused to comment when asked specifically about his party's stand on the "unified" Janata Dal's policies on several issues. He, however, expressed himself against the "unprincipled unification" of different Janata parties.

When asked about the possibility of seat adjustment with the Left parties, Mr Yadav said that his party did not have any objection.

He said that so far, they had not received any such proposal from the Left parties.

The Samajwadi Party leader said that the talks regarding seat arrangements with BSP were continuing and a decision will be taken in the coming two days. The understanding will, however, be limited to Uttar Pradesh only.

PTI and UNI add:

The unified Janata Dal today resolved the bitter wrangling over post-merger positions in the party by constituting a seven-member apex committee with Mr Ajit Singh as convener to decide candidates for the Assembly elections.

The Dal president, Mr S.R. Bommai, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Mr Sharad Yadav, Mr Ram Vilas Paswan, Mr Rasheed Masood, and Mr Om Prakash Chautala will be the other members of the committee.

* Muslim Vote Seen Split Between Mulayam, V.P. Singh

94AS0055D New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 13 oct 93 p 2

[Article by Hemant Sharma: "Is the Muslim Vote Divided Between V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh?"]

[Text] Lucknow, 12 October. The Muslim voters in Uttar Pradesh can prove important in deciding the shape of the future government. Just like in the past, the role of Muslim voters will play a decisive role in the upcoming election.

The issue of Muslim voters has become crucial because of the Hindu wave created by the BJP and its allies. The Muslims are not going to vote wholesale to one party. It appears that their votes will be divided between Mulayam Singh and V.P. Singh just like in 1991. If this division happens that the BJP will be the beneficiary. If the vote is not divided and the Muslim vote goes wholesale to one party, the BJP will still benefit by the polarization of the Hindu vote. It should be remembered that the Muslim votes influence 145 vidhan sabha seats in the sate. The Muslim votes in these 145 seats is more than 14 percent. The Muslims play a decisive role in 87 vidhan sabha seats.

Fifteen percent of voters in the state are Muslim. The non-BJP opposition parties have their eyes on this vote bank. All these parties are trying to attract the Muslims in an organized manner. The Muslims in this state are more angry at the Congress (I) than at the BJP. Jaffaryab Jeelani, organizer of the Babri Masjid Struggle Council, says, "The BJP attacks openly and fights a declared war. The Congress (I), however, stabs you in the back." Still, the Congress (I) has started a campaign to lure the Muslims. Narasimha Rao, the Congress (I) president, had promised even from the outset of the election campaign. In order to break up and use the Muslims votes, the Congress is focusing on the weakest group of this faction, the weavers. The state has promised to pardon their loans worth 470 million rupees. It has also announced grants worth millions of rupees for purchasing handlooms. The Congress (I) is also planning to get support from about 5,000 mosques in the state by increasing salaries of the mosque imams.

There are 15.90 percent Muslims in Uttar Pradesh. The Muslim voters affect 145 vidhan sabha seats and they play a decisive role in 87 seats. It is surprising that most of the Muslim-majority districts are strongholds of the BJP or the Janata Dal. The change in attitude in these districts had accelerated after the incidents involving shilanyas'[establishment of the statue] to the 6 December 1992 destruction of the structure in Ayodhya. The Muslim population is the highest in the 145 seats where they affect the results. In western Uttar Pradesh, the Muslim population in Bijnaur is 39 percent, Moradabad 38 percent, Saharanpur 31 percent, Muzaffar Nagar 28 percent, Bareilly 26 percent, Meerut 25 percent, Pilibhit 20 percent, and Ghaziabad 22 percent.

In eastern Uttar Pradesh, the Muslim population is as follows: 23 percent in Bahraich, 22 percent in Gonda, 20 percent in Basti, and 21 percent in Barabanki. The non-BJP parties became very eager about these votes after the announcement for elections was made. The Muslims have cast voters en masses for one party since 1979. This wholesale vote had helped Congress (I) get a huge majority or a major defeat. Central Food Minister Kalap Nath Rai is very angry at this horse trading of Muslim votes. Says he, "they are still trying to make deals after receiving so much. They should not stay in misunderstanding. The 1991 election has proved that a government can be formed even without the Muslim vote."

The Muslims were never a Congress (I) vote bank after 1971. In 1989 and 1991, the Congress (I) suffered from their anger. The attitude of the Muslims is still the same now. The Muslims are leaning toward V.P. Singh's Janata Dal and Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi Party (SP). The religious leaders of the Muslims have also tried to unite these two parties. However, they were not successful. Now the Janata Dal and the SP are competing for the 16 percent Muslim and 35 percent backward class votes. Meanwhile, the BJP has attracted a major part of the lower caste voters in addition to holding the 25 percent votes of the higher caste Hindus. The Congress (I) appears to be most helpless. Its traditional votes from the Brahmans (12 percent), the Harijans (22 percent) and the Muslims (16 percent) have totally slipped away. The Congress (I) did get one percent votes in the last vidhan sabha election, however, it has no group support left in this state.

The Muslims are in a dilemma over Mulayam Singh and V.P. Singh. Only the election results will tell us how much influence the Shahi Imam will have. The main goal of the Muslims is to defeat the BJP. They vote for whoever appears to help them achieve this goal. The new political equation indicates that the united Janata Dal will get the majority of the Muslim vote because the Janata Dal is the strongest party running against the BJP in western Uttar Pradesh. Kalraj Misra, the BJP president, claims, "We will fight the Janata Dal in the west and in Madhya Pradesh will fight the Janata Dal and the SP. The contest will be three-sided in some parts of eastern Uttar Pradesh. Most of the Muslim-majority districts are in western Uttar Pradesh." The Muslims here are leaning toward the Janata Dal.

The Muslim politics in this state are in a turmoil after the election announcement. However, the Muslim voters are quiet. The Muslim Majlis has appealed them to boycott the election. It will not appoint any candidate in this election. The Muslim Majlis does not have much influence in Uttar Pradesh, however. The Babri Campaign leadership is leaning toward the Janata Dal. However, a small group in it also supports Mulayam Singh. The leadership will make a decision after the Shahi Imam announces his decree. The Islamic religious leaders are holding meetings to start a decisive war against communal forces. Six Muslim organizations including the All India Muslim Youth Congress have appealed in support of the BJP.

* Ayodhya Seen Important Factor in UP Elections

94AS0062B Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 13 Oct 93 p 27

[Text] Lucknow, Oct. 12—As the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections draw near Ayodhya still sets the agenda. Political parties are in jitters and are groping desperately for an effective answer to counter the BJP's [Bharatiya Janata Party] Ram mandir plank.

The BJP is the principal political force and all kinds of strategy are being worked out to beat back the party's onslaught. Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party and Mr Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Samal Party have joined hands. The Congress has identified the BJP as its arch enemy; and the Janata Dal and the Left have also sworn to give the party a sound drubbing.

According to BJP strategists, the party was heading for a comfortable win in Uttar Pradesh. They, however, acknowledge that the situation would have been difficult had there been a consensus among secular and centrist forces.

As of now, the massive political rallies organised by the Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Congress have hardly caused any worry to the BJP camp. Party workers have hardly panicked and their leaders insist on keeping cool.

With all secular and centrist forces gunning for each other, the going seems comfortable for the BJP and the V.P. Singh-Mulayam rift is being viewed with joy in the party.

Mr Yadav has spurned all Janata Dal efforts to put up joint candidates against the BJP. And, since both parties are concentrating on the backward-Harijan-Muslim votebank the resistance from them would be largely defused, the BJP leaders feel.

Given the unreliable past of the Bahujan Samaj Party chief, Mr Kanshi Ram, Samajwadi Party leaders have so far failed to chart out a definite course of action against the BJP. Also, Mr Yadav's image as an anti-Ram mandir leader is being projected by the BJP to mobilise the electorate.

On the other hand, the social justice slogan failed to generate the desired heat and dust as it did in Bihar. That the Mandal fever has subsided here became evident during Mr V.P. Singh's public meetings recently.

In order to make its impact felt, the Congress came out with the new "development and stability" slogan. Repeated assertions by the Prime Minister, Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao, and his colleagues that the Congress could alone provide a stable government in Uttar Pradesh drew a blank from the electorate.

As the ground realities indicate, the Congress support base, mainly consisting of caste Hindus, Harijans and Muslims have eroded. Caste Hindus are siding with the BJP, while Harijans are emerging as a political group in the form of the BSP.

The major comfort that the BJP draws in the present scenario is the emergence of the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister, Mr Kalyan Singh, as non-Yadav backward caste leader in the state. The groundswell of support for the party seems to indicate that it is on strong wicket in the state. It seems, like in 1991 elections, Ram mandir will be on top of the political agenda of the BJP.

* Lack of 'Wave' Amongst Uttar Pradesh Voters Reported

94AS0061A Madras THE HINDU in English 15 Oct 93 p 8

[Article by Hasan Suroor: "U.P. No Wave This Time"]

[Text] A wit in Lucknow's Hazratganj, the hub of city's political gossip, says that the election scene in U.P. [Uttar Pradesh] reminds him of a wedding which was preceded by a nerve-wracking debate on whether to marry the younger or the elder of the two sisters. "And finally when they settled for the younger one it turned out that both were twins ... they were called 'chhoti' and 'badi' only to denote a notional difference!"

That the story is pure fabrication and Mr Wit has been retailing it for years to unsuspecting poll surveyors such as this correspondent is evident from the tell-tale reaction of his friends, but there is no doubt that the fiction neatly fits the facts of pre-election blues. With four major political parties vying to be the chosen one, the choice is apparently wide open. But what if they all turn out to be twins?

The question is haunting most voters, and unable to decide their preferences they are keeping their options open. With no anti or pro "wave" at the moment—indications are that there might not be one at all this time—the air is thick with speculation guesswork, and pure hunch. And if speculation could produce a hung Assembly, then U.P. could be heading for one after next month's elections. For, apart from the combatants' own outlandish claims about their prospects few think that any party would get a sufficient majority to form a Government on its own.

Most people have convinced themselves that there are going to be no outright winners, and indeed underlying the conviction is the wish to be proved right. With the Congress(I) in the dumps, and the Janata Dal and the Samajwadi Party continuing to tilt at each other, the only party which is given an outside chance of scraping through is the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP].

However, even in its case nobody is willing to lay bets and not many would be surprised if it falls short of a majority. It is recognised by the BJP itself, though understandably not openly acknowledged, that it has not gained new converts since the last elections and much would therefore depend on how many of the traditional Congress(I) supporters who were swept off by the Mandir wave in 1991 would stay with the BJP this time. Considering that the BJP won the last elections with a bare majority of two, even a slight shift could make a significant difference to its prospects.

The scourge of the BJP could prove to be dissensions at the middle and lower ranks of the party, especially at the district level, with the kind of scenes witnessed in Delhi over the distribution of party ticket not being ruled out here. A senior BJP activist in Lucknow admits that there is "unrest" in the party, though he dismisses it as "not of much significance."

His younger colleague, Dr. Anupam Alok, in charge of the party's media cell, also acknowledge divisions but puts a gloss describing them as "healthy democratic differences." Playing down the dissensions, Dr. Alok says that come elections and these will give way to party solidarity. "We have strong discipline," he claims suggesting that it would be a good idea to "do a Ph.D. on BJP's discipline."

The situation on the ground, however, is less rosy. Principally, two factors have caused resentment among the BJP ranks: the party's failure to strengthen the organisation in

areas which are not its strongholds but where potential exists for it and the "pampering" of outsiders at the cost of old-time "loyalists."

The party supporters in Mallihabad, for instance, complain of poor organisation pointing out that in the last elections it did not have enough workers even to mobilise voters. In some places, the local BJP units lacked funds to set up polling offices. The result: defeat by a narrow margin. There are fears that history could repeat itself. "There are BJP supporters here but then you must have someone to mobilise them," points out Hari Shankar, a "gur" (jaggery) seller echoing similar sentiments heard in Rae Bareli, Lucknow and several other districts of central U.P.

Other factors said to be weighing against the BJP include a drop in the "Mandir fever," disenchantment of a section of small businessmen with the performance of the erstwhile Kalyan Singh Government (he did not keep his promise to abolish sales tax and up-rooted many small shopkeepers through his beautification drive in Lucknow, and a growing recognition that it is a one-issue party.

For all its weaknesses, however, the BJP remains a frontrunner, with the Samajwadi Party and the united Janata Dal [JD] vying for the second spot in central U.P., the BJP recognises the SP as its main rival dismissing the JD and the Congress(I) as of no consequence. Curiously the man whom the BJP regards as its principal adversary is seen by some as a "creation" of its "disinformation" campaign, allegedly helped by a section of the media.

The argument, rather thin on the face of it, is that by projecting Mr. Yadav as a major force the BJP is playing on his ego and thus discouraging him from aligning himself with the Janata Dal. The idea behind the "disinformation" campaign, it is argued, is to give Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, a sense of self-importance and thus prevent him from aligning with the Janata Dal because such an alliance would hurt the BJP more than anyone else.

How far this is true can be anybody's guess in a climate where no holds are barred, but there is no denying the enigma surrounding Mr. Yadav who is at once perceived as everybody's darling and yet nobody's baby. His principal supporters, outside his own caste base, are Muslims but most are hard put to explain why they are rooting for him. The only reason repeatedly advanced is that he "saved" the Babri masjid in 1990 while Mr V.P. Singh did little to prevent the BJP's rath yatra, and the Congress(I) under Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao actually "colluded" with the demolition squad at Ayodhya.

By a process of elimination whereby Muslims "cannot" vote for the BJP and "will not" vote for the Congress(I), they are left with two choices: the Samajwadi Party and the Janata Dal. And the prevailing wisdom endorsed by a large number of Muslims in central U.P. is that they will settle for the former. In eastern and western U.P., it is the Janata Dal which is likely to pick up a substantial chunk of Muslim votes.

Both the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal are facing a credibility crisis with their traditional supporters. The Muslims, bitter after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, are not willing to trust the Congress(I) any more, not until Mr. Rao is at the helm. His repeated "promise" to reconstruct the masjid has made no impression on Muslims most of whom describe him as an "RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (organization of service to the nation)] proxy." There is a view that a section of Muslims could yet change their mind if the Congress(I) changes its leaders.

The anti-Congress(I) Hindu voters are as much at a loss to explain their anti-Congressism, as Muslims are at a loss to explain their pro-Mulayam bias. The general feeling is that the Congress(I) under Mr. Narasimha Rao has been blundering from one crisis to another, and has lost the sense of direction. The October 9 rally is being dismissed as a "sarkari" show, unlikely to make a significant difference to the party's performance in elections.

A big question before the Congress(I) is: How many of its supporters who went over to the BJP in 1991 would return to its fold.

The Janata Dal, virtually written off in central U.P., expects to do well in eastern and western parts after the recent merger of its three factors. But so widespread is the scepticism about the Janata Dal's capacity to stay together that not many are taking the latest show of unity seriously. An often-heard comment is that there is no point voting for a party which could split again after the elections. Besides, the hostility of upper caste Hindus to its reservations policy remains undiminished, leaving it essentially with the stronghold of individual party leaders—Mr. Ajit Singh in the west, and Mr. Chandra Shekhar and Mr. V.P. Singh in the east.

Although none of the major players is in a commanding position at the moment, touching off speculation about a hung Assembly, it is still too early in the day and the "heat" will begin only after the candidates actually jump into the fray.

• BSP, SJP Alliance Seen Cracking

94AS0058D New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 16 Oct 93 p 7

[Article by Om Prakash: "Samajwadi Party in a Quandary Over BSP's Change of Attitude"]

[Text] New Delhi, 15 October. The Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) alliance in Uttar Pradesh is cracking. The SP had hoped that the BSP would collaborate on some seats in other states also. However, Kanshi Ram adamantly refused to do that yesterday. At the same time, Kanshi Ram has divided the Uttar Pradesh seats equally with the SP. These include the decisive seats in eastern Uttar Pradesh. This attitude of the BSP has caused a lot of commotion in the SP.

The left-wing parties are not collaborating with the BSP-SP coalition in Uttar Pradesh. When this was confirmed yesterday, Kanshi Ram put his claim for the 25 seats that were to be left for the left-wing parties if the agreement was

reached. Kanshi Ram also asked for half of the remaining seats. Yesterday, Kanshi Ram emphasized the fact that the BSP was going to contest 225 seats. Later they agreed on half the seats. Mulayam Singh Yadav had come to Delhi yesterday to discuss distribution of seats with Kanshi Ram.

The formula they both are using is based on the votes cast in the last election. The party whose candidate received more votes in the last election in a specific district will run its candidate there. This has caused a paradoxical situation for Mulayam Singh. He has to give up half the seats to Kanshi Ram even in Etawa, his own district. Mulayam Singh is running for two seats in Bijnaur. The BSP has now claimed these both. The BSP candidates had received more votes than the SP candidates in these seats during the last election. In Gorakhpur, Benaras, and Faizabad districts in eastern Uttar Pradesh, 64 seats are going to BSP and 42 to SP. In Ganjpur, all but one seat is going to the BSP account. The same situation exists in Azam Garh. Five seats in Devaria and six in Gorakhpur have gone to the BSP.

The Janata Dal believed from the beginning that the division of seats between the BSP and SP would happen on this line, and was waiting for this cracking in the coalition. The Janata Dal had calculated the situation and had concluded that it would not be possible to move the SP vote for BSP and vice versa. The voters for both these parties are competing with each other in the village economy system. The campaign committee of the Janata Dal today evaluated this crack in the BSP-SP coalition and decided which direction its election campaign will take. In eastern Uttar Pradesh, where the BSP will run for election, Lalu Prasad Yadav and Sharad Yadav will make extensive trips. Ramvilas Paswan will concentrate in the SP candidates' seats. The Janata Dal believes that the backward classes and the Dalits support it, therefore, their votes can be joined to the Janata Dal vote bank where they do not have their own candidates. The Janata Dal is encouraged also by Ajit Singh's rally in Basti.

Mohan Singh, member of Janata Dal campaign committee, said that the SP had promised election tickets to a lot of people. They are now disgruntled because the ticket situation was not very positive. Kanshi Ram had warned Mulayam Singh earlier that he should not invite people to join the party by telling them they will get election tickets. Mohan Singh said, that because of V.P. Singh's illness and Ajit Singh's leaving the party, only Mulayam Singh was left in the election field of Uttar Pradesh. Thus, he was surrounded by a large number of ticket seekers. Kanshi Ram is also facing the danger of not being able to give enough tickets. The Bahujan Kranti Dal that seceded from the BSP has asserted its decision to run from every seat in Uttar Pradesh. It is trying to have the strong candidates who fail to get BSP tickets to run on its tickets.

The Janata Dal campaign committee learned from its analysis today that the minorities around Lucknow had supported Mulayam Singh in large number during the last election. Now they have learned that Mulayam Singh's party is depending on one person while the Janata Dal has a long line of leaders. The campaign committee has decided to take advantage of this change in people's perception. Efforts will be made to show the whole line of leaders to the people during the campaign. The party will not present Ajit Singh's name more than necessary. This might polarize a special voter group toward another party.

The Janata Dal believes that the crack in the SP-BSP coalition will also cause the leaders who had deserted Janata Dal to join the SP. Raghu Thakur and Mohan Prakash are two such leaders. Raghu has to run on SP support in Bhind now. Mohan Prakash wants ticket from Benaras. He could not get the Lok Sabha seat from Benares from Janata Dal last time. He had joined the SP to show his anger at the Janata Dal. He did not get the Varanasi vidhan sabha seat. The SP has given him the responsibility of organizing the party in Rajasthan, his home state. The Janata Dal has learned through its analyses that the attraction of some Samajwadis toward the SP is ending now. However, the SP leaders do not agree with this Janata Dal analysis. Mohan Prakash says that he never wanted to run for election and will defeat the BJP in many election seats in Rajasthan with the help of the SP. He says the SP-BSP coalition was formed to confront the BJP. He experimented with the election coalition in Uttar Pradesh. If this experiment is successful, it will be used in other states also during the next election.

• Understanding Between Congress, BSP Seen Possible

94AS0056C New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 17 Oct 93 p 3

[Article: "Way Paved for Congress-BSP Alliance"]

[Text] Bhopal, 16 October (JANSATTA). It appears that the way for understanding between the Congress (I) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh is clear. This was made possible by the unconditional release of BSP President Dau Ram Ratnakar and his 160 supporters. However, the most important aspect of this all was keeping the Shukla brothers out of this whole affair. Anyhow, Mr. Ratnakar has decided to hold a rally in Bhopal on 20 October. The BSP leader Kanshi Ram will also participate in this rally.

Mr. Ratnakar and his supporters were arrested about eight months ago. They were accused of surrounding a police station and coming to blows with police officers. The BSP workers under the leadership of Mr. Ratnakar were asking to register complaint about a rape. The BSP claimed that five boys of upper caste gang raped a Harijan girl. The son of a priest was also among those accused of rape. This alleged incident occurred in Shivri Narayn village in Bilaspur district. The police neither registered the case nor did they hold an inquiry. At that time, the Congress (I) leader Shyamacharan Shukla had accused the BSP of trying to incite tension among various caste people in Chhattis Garh area.

A few months ago, Congress (I) President and Prime Minister Narasimha Rao sent a messenger to Kanshi Ram to discuss possible election cooperation. Kanshi Ram had refused to talk with the Congress (I) until Ratnakar and 160 BSP workers were released unconditionally.

The Congress (I) was worried because of the increasing influence of the BSP in U.P. and Madhya Pradesh. It considered cooperation with the BSP in these states important in order to fight the BJP. Thus, Mr. Rao, the party president and prime minister, gave Bhuvnesh Chaturvedi, minister of state in prime minister's office, the responsibility to talk with the BSP. A veteran central minister from Madhya Pradesh, Vidya Charan Shukla, was kept totally unaware of this whole affair. Finally, Mr. Chaturvedi accepted BSP leader Kanshi Ram's demand and paved the way for cooperation between the two parties.

* Caste Said Still Major Dividing Factor in UP

94AS0061D Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 18 Oct 93 p 7

[Article by Arvind Singh Bisht: "Caste to Play Vital Role in UP Polls"]

[Text] Lucknow, October 17—The caste factor is likely to play an important role this time in the forthcoming assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh [UP].

This is indicated by the changed strategy of all the major political parties, which are currently engrossed in appeasing different castes by promising them a better deal in the state. Although the caste factor has always influenced the voting pattern of the state, this time it seems to have gained yet another dimension.

Its magnitude can be gauged from the fact that even the citadels of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Pradesh] and the Congress have been threatened. Within the Congress, the UPCC [Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee] chief, Mr Mahavir Prasad, has recently said that he does not enjoy the trust of some of his partymen as he belongs to the scheduled caste.

The same situation persists in other parties too and there is a clear demarcation on caste lines. Every caste is demanding its pound of flesh from each of the parties. This has compelled all political parties to field a candidate of a particular caste in such constituency where it holds sway.

The Hindutava wave seems to have receded. In the past, it united the majority Hindus over the Ayodhya issue and tilted the balance in favour of the BJP. But now, the Hindus as well as the Muslims seem to be divided on caste lines.

Caste division is wide open among the backward and the scheduled caste classes, who account for about 56 per cent and 22.5 per cent respectively of the total 13 crore electorate in Uttar Pradesh.

Recent conferences of Pal, Pasi, Kushwah, Rathor and Jaiswal communities give ample indication of the caste divide. Leaders of all these organisations have repeatedly said that they would support the party which fields more of their candidates in the forthcoming polls.

Even the upper caste, who account for about 16 per cent of the total electorate, is sharply divided. The Chitransh Sabha, an organisation of Kayasthas, has also joined the fray to secure more tickets for the assembly polls from different political parties. Recently, it has submitted a list of its candidates to different political parties. The Chitransh Sabha has demanded ten tickets from the Samajwadi Party alone, according to Mr Mukesh Alakh, convenor of the Chitransh.

This new trend seems to have compelled all the political parties to stick more to the caste factor. It seems neither the Kamandal nor the Mandal issues can check it.

Already the BJP, which is considered to be the most disciplined party faced a rowdy scene by its own partymen recently at its New Delhi office over the choice of candidates for the Delhi assembly polls. The disgruntled partymen opposed the Punjabi dominance in the party.

The Hindutva slogan of the BJP now seems to be in peril. Even the party leaders feel that unless it can stop the spiit of Hindu votes on caste liens, particularly of the Vaish community and the backward classes, who were its main support base in the past elections, it cannot make any dent in the forthcoming elections.

That the BJP feels it is unable to cope with the rise of regionalism is evident from the fact that the party is once again planning to revive the Mandal issue, although a survey conducted by it indicates that it has lost much of its appeal.

The picture about the other political parties will be clear when they come out with their lists of candidates, but it cannot be denied that they too face the same problem.

Even for the SP chief, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, it will be difficult to reconcile for the party tickets between Yadavs and Kurmis, who are the most affluent among the backward classes. Because of this, he has made an attempt to woo the Vaish community by promising to abolish sales tax. On the other hand, he has tried to bring to his fold Pasi and other backward castes, who were termed as "criminal castes" during the British regime, by promising to abolish the goonda and the gangster acts and assuming far-reaching changes in the criminal procedure code.

Among the Muslims too, the caste factor this time is likely to play an upper hand. Despite an outcry against the Congress, the All India Momin Conference, an organisation of weavers, has pledged its support to the Congress. Significantly, recently, a Rs 46-crore loan taken by the weavers was waived by the state at the behest of the Prime Minister, Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao.

Similarly, the Gaddi Samaj of Muslims, which until now had shown aversion to any political leaning, has lent its support to the Janata Dal. However, the samaj has demanded a better deal for the party in ticket distribution.

In view of this clear caste division among the voters who comprise both Hindus and Muslims, it is difficult for poll pundits to forecast the result of the elections. Moreover, it is not the urban voters, who account for only 20 per cent, but 80 per cent of rural voters belonging to the backward classes who will call the slids.

*** Mulayam Singh Being Held Scapegoat for 'Failure of Secular Alliance'**

94AS0062D Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 18 Oct 93 p 7

[Text] Lucknow, Oct 17—The battle lines in Uttar Pradesh are yet to be drawn although elections are just around the corner.

Barely a day is left for filing of nominations and political pundits, baffled by the changing political equations, are not hazarding a guess on the political fate of the most populous state.

Except the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], almost all parties are ambiguous regarding their respective stands. The Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party combine, which is being projected as a viable alternative to the BJP, is in fact a divided house with both components squabbling over seat-sharing. Obviously, the combine is left with little time to work out a joint strategy for wooing voters.

Much as he denies it, the fact remains that the Samajwadi Party chief (SP), Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, despite his wrestling credentials, is finding it difficult to rein in the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader, Mr Mr Kanshi Ram. Sources claimed that Mr Kanshi Ram was demanding a lion's share of the seats much to Mr Yadav's chagrin.

As of now, Mr Yadav appears to be the lone challenger in the BJP-dominated millieu. The Left parties have spurned his efforts to forge an alliance of secular parties excluding the Janata Dal leader, Mr V.P. Singh. The CPI [Communist Party of India], CPM [Communist Party of India-Marxist] and the IPF [Indian People's Front (leftist group)], though not a force to reckon with in the state if taken singly, have criticised Mr Yadav for his obstinacy in keeping out Mr V.P. Singh. They have blamed him for sabotaging a secular alliance that could have defeated the BJP.

The Uttar Pradesh strongman's hopes of forging an alliance of minorities, like the Harijuns, Muslims and backward castes, have been shattered by Mr Kanshi Ram. Mr Kanshi Ram is not too keen on aligning with the Muslims. His tricky ways [it] seems are alienating Mr Yadav.

If Mr Yadav wins his bout against Mr Kanshi Ram, few dispute that he would dictate terms in state politics. But if he loses, it would signify his end.

That Mr Yadav is aware of this is evident from his recent behaviour. He is already looking elsewhere so that he does not find himself in a soup should the BSP fail him. Not only is he avoiding criticising the Congress(I), he is also projecting the socialist movement as a by-product of Congressism. He has even toned down his tirades against his opponents.

The Congress(I), which is fighting a losing battle in Uttar Pradesh, is finding solace in a silent friend like Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav. Senior Congress leaders foresee a tacit agreement with the SP in those seats where Congress candidates are strong but need a slight push to win. The SP is expected to help the Congress(I) in about 50-75 seats.

The Janata Dal, on its part, is mainta aining a low-profile but is steadily gaining ground in the western part of the state where the Jat leader, Mr Ajit Singh, holds sway. The successful rally organised by Mr Singh recently indicated that the mainly Jat voters here would side with him. The SP is not considered a contender here. Since the Jat factor determines the results of about 40 Assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh, the Janata Dal is expected to fare well in the western parts.

The Dal also seems bent on making a dent in the Yadav-dominated constituencies in eastern Uttar Pradesh. Dal strategists are considering calling the Bihar chief minister, Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav, to address the downtrodden. Unlike the Janata Dal, the SP does not seem to be confident in its homeground.

Though the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal will make little impact on their own, none can deny that they would eclipse the emergence of any political force which could challenge the BJP. Since both these parties have an anti-BJP plank, they will divide the anti-BJP votes and diminish the chances of the SP-RSP.

But the silence of the biggest rival of these parties, the BJP, has kept many on tenterhooks. The BJP is deliberately maintaining a low-profile as it knows its victory lies in the split in anti-BJP votes. But it is also on a sticky wicket if an opinion poll conducted by it is to be believed. The survey shows that the party will get about 175-200 seats in the 425-member Assembly. It also shows that, compared to 1991, the Ram mandir figures low on the voter's list of priorities.

It is because of this that BJP strategists are hastily trying to shift the focus from the temple to other issues. In its latest posters and leaflets, the name of Lord Ram is missing. Instead they have defiant writings claiming credit for the demolition of the mosque and describing the act as a "demolition of a symbol of slavery."

Despite this last-minute hesitancy, the BJP is better placed than its rivals.

*** UP's Mountain Districts Seen Straight Contest Between BJP, Congress**

94AS0058B New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 18 Oct 93 p 3

[Article by Manoj Mishra: "Signs of a Congress-BJP Confrontation in the Hills"]

[Text] Merrut, 17 October. In spite of all possible efforts by the Samajwadi Party, there are indications that the Congress (I) and the BJP will have direct competition for 19 vidhan sabha seats in the mountains. The mountains are Congress (I)'s impregnable fort. Even during the 1989 Janata Dal wave, the Congress (I) had won many seats here. In the 1991 elections, the BJP tore down this fort. The main reason for this change is the special and different attitude and election equation of the mountain people. The minority and lower caste voters there are nominal. The majority of mountain people are Brahmans and Thakurs who are not affected by the Mandal recommendations.

The BJP goals for Ram's temple and demand for a separate Uttranchal state in the last election were very effective.

Among the BJP leaders who can be effective in the mountains, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi had always practiced his politics in Allahabad and ran for election from Almora. That is why he won only twice. The BJP does not have a strong leader of Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna and Narayan Dutt Tiwari's caliber yet. Still the BJP won four Parliament seats and 15 out of the 19 Vidhan Sabha seats. The BJP found the opportunity to spread its roots here. In spite of much effort, the Congress (I) could not provide proof for the accusations they had levied against BJP cabinet members Kedar Singh Fonia, Harak Singh Rawat, or Harvansh Kapur. Janata Dal could win only one seat—the reserved seat of Chakrata. Vinod Badathwal, a Mulayam Singh Yadav lieutenant, could not even recover his election deposit when he ran from Mussoorie. There are doubts about Janata Dal's Munna Chauhan ever winning election here again.

The Congress is ahead now where preparations are concerned. It can be said that the Congress (I) is prepared to run for elections only in the mountains and is trying everything there. Coincidentally, no U.P. leader has ever had a monopoly in the mountains. Even Govind Ballabh Pant, who was known as the most popular mountain leader, did not have as much influence in Garhwal as much he had in Kumaeon region. Later, Narayan Dutt Tiwari emerged as the most powerful leader from Kumaeon region. At that time, Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna was even more influential in Garhwal. Even today, it is considered difficult to win election in Garhwal if one openly disagrees with Bahuguna.

Later, both of them were opposed by Congress (I) people. Krishan Chander Pant has always opposed Tiwari. Actually, Pant was the number one leader and Tiwari became the leader by defeating him. Tiwari took care of him by vetoing election ticket to Pant for three consecutive elections. Now there are only a few supporters of K.C. Pant there. After taking care of Pant, he has set up a front against Harish Rawat Tiwari, vice present of Congress Seva Dal. Narayan Dutt Tiwari is opposed to separating the mountain region. Meanwhile, Harish Rawat is organizing the mountain people for forming a mountain federation.

Similarly, when Bahuguna changed party and joined the Janata Dal and the Lok Dal, former central minister Braham Dutt became the primary leader in Garhwal. However, he could not decrease Bahuguna's influence. After Bahuguna's death, his wife Kamala Bahuguna joined the Congress (I). Kamala Bahuguna was not very successful during the last election, and even lost her bid for a ticket. The Congress High Command has recognized her importance and has included her in the state election committee.

The BJP will benefit from the factionalism in the Congress (I), its leaders' apathy, and the talk about nonexistence of Congress (I) influence in the mountain region. The BJP will run for election on the issues of temple and a separate mountain state again. It will accuse the central government of not allowing the formation of a separate state of Uttranchal. The BJP is also suffering from factionalism now and the Congress (I) will benefit from it. The Janata Dal just did not make any organized effort in the mountains, therefore, it appears that the third place will go the to Samajwadi Party.

There are talks about Harvansh Kapur, who had been elected legislator twice, losing his ticket this time. The BJP will be the main contender if this happens. Vinod Chandaula had ran for election against Kapur in Dehradun district last time. Now, Bahuguna's son, Shekhar Bahuguna, and Surendar Agarwal are also staking their claims for the ticket here. Narender Tiwari, who had defeated Pushkar Singh of Congress (I) in the 1989 election from Pauri had ran for the election on Samajwadi Party ticket. He was never a part in the main contest. Harak Singh Rawat of the BJP defeated Pushkar Singh by 10,792 votes.

There will be strong competition over the Badri-Kedar seat in Chamoli district. There are talks about Congress (I) ticket being given to Bechendri Pal to former legislator Kunwar Singh Negi to run against Kedar Singh, former BJP cabinet member. Dr. Shivanand Nautial, the dynamic Congress (I) leader, will run from Karan Pryag, the second seat in Pauri district. He was defeated by BJP's Ramesh Pokharial in the last election. Lansdowne, the third seat in this district, was Bahuguna's Vidhan Sabha seat. His disciple, Bharat Singh Rawat, managed to ride the BJP wave and win the seat by only 478 votes.

Lakhi Ram Joshi of the BJP had won from Tihri. Former Tihri legislator Braham Dutt himself is a candidate there now. There was also talks about his son Nav Prabhat running for election. Matav Singh Bhandari of the BJP had defeated Dharam Singh Bhandari of the Congress (I) and former legislator Mantri Prasad Maithani in Dev Paryag, the second seat in Tihri. It is expected that he will run again now. In Uttar Kashi, former Mulayam Singh cabinet member Vafia Lal Juthawan came out third in the last election. BJP's Gyan Chand had won from there. There are talking about making former Congress leader Baldev Singh Arya's daughter the candidate from here. Ghulab Singh had gotten the Congress (I) ticket for his son Paritam Singh in the last election. He had won from Chakrata every time except in 1977. However, Janata Dal's Munna Chauhan benefitted from his opposition. He managed to get the seat. From Mussoorie, BJP's Rajender Singh won.

The Congress (I) fared similarly in Kumaeon as in Garhwal. In spite of Narayan Dutt Tiwari himself running for election from Haldwani, the Congress (I) won only two seats. That too because Tilak Raj Bahed lost only by 3204 votes in Haldwani. BJP's Bacchi Singh Rawat won from Ranikhet. Puran Chander Arya, also of the BJP, won from Bageshwari, the third seat in the district. Lila Ram Sharma of the Congress (I) Party won Didihat seat in Pithora Garh. He defeated Narayan Gaisoda of the BJP by 7422 votes. Naveen Punetha of the BJP won the Pithora Garh seat.

The Janata Dal does not have a solid base in the mountains, and none of its leaders have made any productive effort. Because of the caste equation, the Janata Dal does not have much share in mountain districts. Mulayam Singh did

create a small base in the mountains after he made a five-day sweeping tour there. His party may emerge as the third force after the BJP and the Congress (I) there.

* BSP, Samajwadi Party Bickering Over Seat Distribution

94AS0065E New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 21 Oct 93 p 3

[Article: "Squabble Over Seats Between BSP and SP"]

[Text] Lucknow, 20 October. After the agreement over seats, the whole affair between the BSP and the SP is dangling over the distribution of the seats. The BSP and the SP have generally agreed as to at how many seats each will contest. Mulayam Singh has also given the list containing the names of his 173 candidates to Kanshi Ram. However, every thing is implicated in the division of seats. Mulayam Singh wants the BSP to take back its claim for some seats from where former members of Mulayam Singh's cabinet had run for election and had received less votes than the BSP candidates. There are about two dozen ministers from Mulayam Singh's government who were beaten by the BSP in their districts. Mulayam Singh is willing to give up other seats for the BSP, however, no solution has been reached. Mulaym Singh and Kanshi Ram will meet over this issue in Delhi today and tomorrow.

Kapil Dev Singh, the general secretary of the Samajwadi Party, says, "There is no problem over the 13 seats where the BSP had won in the last election. The BSP candidates will run for those seats. The problem is over about 160 seats where the BSP candidates had come second or third." The problem is that the candidates for these seats are either important SP leaders or the leaders who claim these seats and have joined the SP recently. There are six district where the position of the SP is clear. This is what the BSP claims. In about 15 districts in central and western part of the state, the SP has an upper hand over the BSP. There must be some exchange of seats in order to run a joint campaign. Mulayam Singh argues this point.

The SP leaders are trying to save their tickets from the BSP pressure. There are many new members of their party. For example, the ticket for Shyam Lal Yadav, former Rajya Sabha vice chairman who has jumped from the Congress (I) to the SP, is stuck in Charai because of the BSP claim. The same situation is for Avadhesh Prasad, Harijan Welfare minister in Mulayam Singh government, in Faizabad; Education Minister Ashok Bajpayee in Hardoi; and Law Minister Janradan Prasad Ojha in Gorakhpur. The candidacy of Yamuna Prasad, minister of fishery, is stuck in Banda. The BSP has claimed all these seats. These ministers had lost their election deposits here and the BSP candidates had come either in second or third place. All the former ministers in Mulayam Singh's government are fighting for their election tickets. Mulayam Singh had first decided that his candidates will not run against left-wing party candidates. However, the BSP had claimed all such seats, and it has refused to leave any seat for the left-wing parties.

Kapil Dev Singh, the SP general secretary, says that Kanshi Ram does not want to give up seat to the left-wing parties under this agreement. Kanshi Ram had said that the SP should make agreement with the CPI (M) and CPI (I) over its own seats. The BSP has claimed the 25 seats given to the left-wing parties. In Varnasi district, the SP has gotten only four out of the 14 seats there. The remaining 10 have been claimed by the BSP. The SP vote arithmetic in gorakhpur, Varnasi, and Faizabad districts is going haywire. The BSP has 64 seats and SP has 42 seats here. In Gazipur district, all but one seat have gone to the BSP. Five of Devaria and six of Gorakhpur seats have also gone to the BSP. The whole Bundelkhand is closed for the SP. The BSP has claimed all but two seats here.

The formula for dividing seats between the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party is based on the votes received in the last election. The party whose candidate received more votes is to run its candidate from that district. This formula increased Mulayam Singh's problems. He had to give up half of the seats in his own district, Etawah, to the BSP. Mulayam Singh does not want anyone to interfere in his own district. At time, the BSP and SP have agreed to have equal number of seats. The whole affair is entangled over the vote arithmetic. The seats that the BSP is getting in exchange are in the districts where it has no support base. Therefore, the BSP hesitates in leaving its strong seats in those districts.

* Mulayam Singh Hints At Possible Coalition With Janata Dal

94AS0068E Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 24 Oct 93 p 5

[Interview with Mulayam Singh Yadav by THE STATESMAN; first paragraph THE STATESMAN introduction]

[Text] Mulayam Singh Yadav is confident. He claims he doesn't need the support of any party, except for Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Samaj Party, to win the elections in Uttar Pradesh. He has rejected the proposals made by the leaders of the "unified" Janata Dal on seat adjustments in Uttar Pradesh. The diminutive wrestler from Etawah probably does not want an action replay. He hates opposition from within. His only problem so far has been the irrepressible Kanshi Ram, whose statements have upset the "thekedars" of minority votes. Mulayam Singh spoke to THE STATESMAN during his short visit to Delhi last week.

THE STATESMAN: Why did you spurn the offer to join the Janata Dal?

Mulayam Singh: We didn't want to lose our identity. In the last two-and-a-half years we have struggled for the cause of backward classes and minorities, and we did not want to get diverted by joining the ring again. There is nothing they have in common, except that they don't want to be wiped out completely. It is an unprincipled unification. I did not join them because I have my own priorities and I didn't wish to lose them by joining the "unified" Janata Dal. I do not want to squander the lead that I have secured.

THE STATESMAN: Will you be able to make it on your own?

Mulayam Singh: It is in the air. If you had visited UP in the last two months you would have sensed the wave. We are sure of winning in UP with a comfortable margin. We are going to the polls with a clear anti-BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and anti-Congress policy.

THE STATESMAN: What will happen if there is a hung assembly. Would you seek support from the Congress or the "unified" Janata Dal?

Mulayam Singh: There is no such possibility. We have struggled against communal forces for a long time. That would hold us in good stead now. People have already started coming to us as if we are the party in power. We are quite ahead of other parties.

THE STATESMAN: Let's assume for the sake of argument that such a thing happens, with BJP being the single latest party.

Mulayam Singh: In that situation we will try and work out a solution. But the Congress will not be approached under any circumstances. Maybe we will think about an alliance with Janata Dal then. One thing is however clear—we will not let the BJP form the Government this time. We are contesting the elections in alliance with BSP [Bahujan Samaj Party].

THE STATESMAN: But Kanshi Ram's soft attitude towards the Congress and his statements against the Muslim community seem to be troubling your supporters. Don't you think it will affect your party's poll prospects?

Mulayam Singh: I have talked to Kanshi Ramji. He has categorically said that he doesn't have any understanding with the Congress party. As for the statements against the minority community, I have addressed several meetings with him but I never heard him say anything that goes against Muslims.

* All Parties Claimed Nervous About Polls in UP

94AS0068A Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 27 Oct 93 p 6

[First paragraph THE STATESMAN comment]

[Text] Lucknow, Oct. 26—For all their bravado and bluster, leaders of the three major parties in Uttar Pradesh have displayed a remarkable fraying of nerves, due perhaps to the enormity of what is at stake.

Barring the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Dal], all the major political parties contesting the November elections in Uttar Pradesh failed to announce the names of their respective nominess for the 425 seats even after the deadline for filing of the nomination papers ended at 5 p.m. yesterday.

Utter chaos prevailed in the camps of the Congress(I), the Janata Dal and the Samajwadi Party-BSP [Bahujan Samaj Party] combine as still it was not clear who would get the party symbol and from which constituencies.

The big news in the Congress(I) camp is that the former state Chief minister and party veteran, Mr Narain Dutt Tewari, is not standing for election. Mr Tewari stood his ground by not filing his nomination papers, against the wishes of the party High Command which wanted him to contest from Haldwani, the seat he won by a margin of 3,204 votes from his nearest BJP rival in the 1991 elections.

In conversation with this correspondent some time ago, Mr Tewari offered reasons as to why he was not likely to file his papers. He spoke of losing interest in State politics as he felt out of place with the new party culture of money, muscle and crime. That might be true, but there is another reason: a crisis of confidence. This does not imply any personal uncertainty, merely a lack of faith in his party's likely electoral fortunes.

Surprisingly, this crisis of confidence is not confined to Mr Tewari and/or the Congress(I). It has reportedly inflicted even Mr Kalyan Singh of the BJP and Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party, the two leaders touted as being in the running for Chief Ministership.

Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav has filed his papers from three constituencies—Shikhohabad, Jaswant Nagar and Nidhauli Kalan—betraying nerves which, by all reasoning, should be under control. Mr Yadav was able to win two seats in 1991 by comfortable margins, in the face of the saffron tide. This time, however, religion is likely to play a greater role and, given that the neighbouring seats were won by the BJP, Mr Yadav's circumspection takes on a different dimension.

Mr Kalyan Singh sprang a similar surprise when he announced his decision to contest from two constituencies—Atrauli and Kasganj—on the plea that he feared foul play by the District Magistrate of Aligarh, who is the returning officer for Atrauli. This scarcely shows the feeling the BJP claims to evoke in the State and the actions of a senior leader—Mr Singh is a party vice-president—are not likely to inspire confidence among party workers.

The worst that could have happened to Mr Singh was that the elections might have been deferred or countermanded in Atrauli, thereby preventing the BJP leader from becoming a member of the next House immediately. This would not, however, have prevented him from being elected leader of the party in the legislature and eventually becoming Chief minister.

It appears that Mr Singh fears losing the seat he won the last time by handsome margin and the prospects of the other parties fielding a common candidate against him could have added to that fear. Either way, he would have earned greater public esteem had he stood from one constituency, even though he might have lost the vote. But with the Chief Ministership of the country's largest State at stake, there appeared to be only one solution.

BJP

* BJP Forecast To Fall Short of Uttar Pradesh Majority

94AS0047E Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 4 Sep 93 p 4

[Article by Rajeev Deshpande]

[Text] New Delhi, Sept 3—Notwithstanding the BJP's confidence in the Ram temple plank, the party will have to overcome large areas of organisational and political weakness before recapturing power in the electorally-crucial state of Uttar Pradesh.

According to party strategists, the BJP today stands to win 180 Assembly seats in the state, 33 seats short of a majority in a House of 425. The party has identified pockets of weakness in western and east Uttar Pradesh where considerable amount of spade work is needed to prop up its electoral prospects.

Party sources, even while stressing that the conditions created by the Ram Janmabhoomi movement would see the BJP through to power, admitted that ad hocism in the state unit's affairs was a problem. The cadre has been affected by ground-level conflicts between various factions.

The rifts surfaced recently when the former chief minister of the state, Mr Kalyan Singh's move to change between 15 and 20 per cent of party candidates and to promote Other Backward Classes claims ran into trouble. Mr Singh's plan faced stiff resistance from entrenched interests in the party's traditional leadership.

Thus, the principle of "sitting, getting" will influence the distribution of party tickets for the Assembly polls. The party unit has not been able to fully adjust to the expansion in the state. "The party support base has gone beyond being a baniabrahmin club. But, the class character in many areas is as before. This refusal to come to terms with change will take some toll," a party leader pointed out.

However, the BJP sees the fractured state of the Opposition as a major factor in ensuring electoral success. It is aware that a 33 per cent vote was enough to ensure a saffron government in the state in 1991. With prospects of the Janata Dal and the Samajwadi Party coming together fading rapidly, the BJP's electoral performance can only improve.

Surprisingly, the party sees a weakness in western Uttar Pradesh where the Jat vote had swung decisively in its favour during the last elections. This swing has slackened and efforts would have to be made to revive the community's affinity for the party.

Some of the areas where the BJP will have to pull up its socks are Etah, Etawah, Aligarh, Bulandshahr, Farrukhabad, Sitapur, Mainpuri and Hardoi. In east Uttar Pradesh are Azamgarh, Mirzapur, Ballia, Ghazipur, Allahabad, Deoria, Sultanpur and Pratapgarh which would cause worry to the party.

The limitations in the party apparatus have been severely exposed in the BJP's efforts to accommodate the groundswell created in its favour by the Ram-Janmabhoomi movement. Partymen point out that there has been a failure in organising the cadre in useful "peace time" work after the dismissal of the Kalyan Singh government on December 6 last year.

Even the party's attempts to take up "people's issues," such as fertiliser hikes and remunerative cane prices, have failed miserably. Mr Singh's own programme of touring all districts in the state did not charge up the cadre. His efforts to woo the OBCs and Scheduled Caste sections have also remained largely limited.

While Mr Singh has been visiting Harijan quarters in villages and holding dinners and public functions there, most other leaders have stayed put in Lucknow. The BJP is hoping that the leader's yatra through the state on the issue of the religion Bill will have the desired effect of perking up cadre as well as creating popular support for the party.

* Kalayan Singh Claims 'Janadesh' Will Redefine Election

94AS0006C Varanasi AJ in Hindi 23 Sep 93 p 2

[News Report: "Next Election and Religious Issues"]

[Text] Mr. Kalyan Singh, the BJP national vice chairman and former U.P. chief minister, said that the next election will give the people's mandate for "religious politics." He said that the legislation to separate religion from politics introduced by the Congress government was just a conspiracy to keep the BJP out of the elections. If such a black law is passed then independent and impartial elections cannot be held in this country. He declared that the BJP would win the upcoming elections in the four states with a strong majority.

Mr. Kalyan Singh who is leading the janadesh' (people's awakening) tour that started from Calcutta told the newsmen at the Circuit House during his stay in Varanasi that the government has put the religion-related legislation on the back burner because it did not get two-third votes necessary to pass it in the Parliament. Now it is trying to amend the 1951 Representation Law as a part of its conspiracy to establish one party's rule in this country. Now they are trying to get this amendment passed in the Parliament. This amendment is not only a conspiracy to restrict democracy but also to limit freedom of expression and restrain the authority of the court. He said that all in all this amendment is a conspiracy to change the basis of the constitution and attack the principles on which elections are based.

Mr. Singh said that this legislation and the amendment both are to keep the BJP, which is getting more and more popular support, out of the elections. A Law that forbids spreading prejudice over religion, caste, origin, and language during the elections already exist in our country. Article 3 (3A) of the 1951 Representation Law and Article 152 (A) of the Indian Penal Code prohibit abuse of religion, caste, and language in elections. Therefore, a new law is not needed for this purpose. He said that there is danger to politics from sins and not from religion. There is

danger to our country from corruption and the practice of communal appeasement, and criminalization of our politics. The former chief minister said that the process of polarization of thinking has started in our country now. On one side is the cultural nationalism represented by the BJP and on the other side is the elusive secularism. He said that the BJP supported equal rights for all citizens and will implement it when it gains power. Article 44 of our Constitution gives equal rights to all the citizens, however, Article 30 is being used just to appease the minorities. This Article gave the minority the right to operate their own schools. He said that our country does not need the commission for minorities.

He told that the five topics that the BJP has made its elections issues are: National and personal security, ending corruption at high level, appropriate economic policy, social justice, and construction of Ram's temple in Ayodhya. He said that the mosque in Ayodhya should be built outside of the Panchkoshi. The Hindus will be able to do kar seva if this happens. He invited the Muslims to help build Ram's temple in Ayodhya. He said that the BJP received strong popular support in West Bengal and Bihar during his five-day janadesh' tour, and this points to the changes that will happen in our political arena. The Center's fear that janadesh' tour would increase tension proved to be wrong because no violence occurred during this stretch. He also demanded that elections of the Lok Sabha and Delhi's Vidhan Sabha should also be held.

* BJP Said Benefitting From Divided Opposition in UP

94AS0047H Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 30 Sep 93 p 2

[Article by Mahesh Rangarajan]

[Text] Kanpur, Sept. 29—Though the election campaign is yet to pick up in Kanpur, the BJP is set to gain from the division among its opponents and the growing communalisation of politics.

The head of the city unit of the BJP, Mr Ram Vilas Tripathi, is confident that the party will improve on its previous tally of six out of seven Assembly seats in Kanpur. "The Hindu vote has become a force and we will win even in areas with large number of Muslim voters," he said.

The BJP in 1991, won its seats by large margins, the least being 12,000 votes. Mr Tripathi said, "The margin may be smaller this time. But if a rival secular party takes away a few thousand votes, it will deliver the seat to us."

One threat that the BJP faces is from the students. The reason for this is the ordinance against copying passed by the Kalyan Singh government in 1991.

In the latest of many such incidents, policemen beat up a student at DAV College on Monday while exams were in progress. The National Students Union of India leader, Mr Kailash Agnihotri, said the anger of the students is directed at the BJP.

Several students said they were inclined to support Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav due to his promise to withdraw the ordinance. "Our future is ruined if we are arrested," said a BA final year student.

Mulayam threat: Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party (SP) seems to be the leading alternative to the BJP in the city. Sunderlalji of Musavisi village who comes to the city every day for work says, "Mulayam is our true leader, as he works for the poor."

A Samajwadi Party leader pointed out that though the Bahujan Samaj Party and the SP do not coordinate their activities except when they organise public meetings, at election time the combine will get votes.

The Janata Dal is, however, confident of doing well in the rural hinterland. The party general secretary, Mr Harmohan Singh Bhalla, claims that the rural youth are with them because of the Mandal issue. But privately the Janata Dal leaders admit the failure of unity talks will make it difficult to stop the BJP. The regularity of the refrain, "United we can defeat the BJP" itself is evidence of the perils of disunity.

The Janata parivar's main weakness is its lack of organisation. The party offices are in a bad state and it takes a long time to track down spokesmen. But though they lack Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav's charisma, they may have a role to play as the party has a base.

The Congress(I) is confident of making a breakthrough with its twin message of Vinaash ko roko (stop destructive quarrels) and vikaas lao (usher development). But the party leaders are confused and dispirited.

Mr Ashok Mehta, a small businessman, sees some sense in the Congress(I) argument. Since 1989, there has been no development. Due to lack of power his mini-cement plant is lying idle. But he adds: "The Congress(I) is finished, why waste a vote."

BJP muscle: The BJP's muscle is derived from a mix of factors at work. One is the sharp polarisation of views in communal lines.

The streets of Chamanganj, a predominantly Muslim area, are peaceful, but beneath the surface there are tensions.

The men of the Rapid Action Force stand at corners. Many local Muslim leaders have joined Mr Yadav as they see in him their best bet to checkmate the BJP.

The polarisation of opinions come across in casual conversations. While Muslims are apprehensive about their safety, the destruction of Babri Masjid has struck a chord among many Hindus.

The former CPI(M) MP, Ms Subhasini Ali, is apprehensive that the BJP may engineer violence if they are unsure of the poll results. She is taken aback by change of relations between communities. The former MP recounts how an old lady who got a gas connection because of her is upset that she helped Muslim riot victims.

Another advantage of the BJP is its ability to draw on the support of RSS. "The children of the leaders of different

parties study in our Saraswati Sishu Mandir," explained a RSS pracharak on deputation to the BJP. "Even as their parents preach against us, the children imbibe our values," he added.

The religion card has served the party well. A trade union worker said, "We may be against the sangh, but it is often different with our wives." With Ramlila round the corner, the Bajrang Dal has also infiltrated several local committees.

* BJP Said Ready to Appoint Khurana as Chief Minister in UP

94AS0040D New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 7 Oct 93 p 3

[Article: "BJP Agrees on Khurana as Chief Minister"]

[Text] New Delhi, 6 October. The BJP has agreed on Madan Lal Khurana as chief minister in Delhi. He was known as the natural choice of the BJP in Delhi, however, the party and RSS had kept their options open. The final decision whether Mr. Khurana should run for vidhan sabha or in the case of BJP winning the election, should resign from the Parliament and run for the vidhan sabha will be made later. The second strong contender for the position of chief minister, Professor Vijay Kumar Malhotra, has already told the high command of the party that he will not run for the election if Mr. Khurana does. In case Mr. Khurana is to become the chief minister, he will be asked to run from south Delhi district.

Now that there is consensus over the chief minister's position, it has become easier to issue tickets for other districts. In a meeting of top leaders, early on Thursday morning, they are expected to make the final list of candidates. Later, after going through the formality of having them approved in the State Election Committee, the list will be forwarded to the Central Legislative Board. The Election Committee on 1 October has authorized its president, Professor Om Prakash Kohli, to meet with these leaders separately and discuss additional details.

According to party sources on Tuesday Sikandar Bakht, opposition leader in the Rajya Sabha and member of the state election committee; Karishan Lal Sharma, acting election commissioner appointed by the Center; Madan Lal Khurana; and Dr. Suresh Bajpayee, RSS observer for the state consulted with Professor Kohli and make the list really short. There was total agreement over at least 20 seats. Only 15 seats have three candidates for each, and the remaining seats have two possible candidates.

On Tuesday night, Professor Kohli and Mr. Khurana met in the presence of Party President Lal Karishna Advani and Karishan lal Sharma and generally agreed on the names of possible candidates. Later, in the RSS office at Keshav Kunj, this issue was further discussed in the presence of Professor Kohli, Mr Khurana, Dr. Bajpayee and a veteran RSS leader. Late at night today, the core group of the party that was formed last June was to meet to make the final cuts in the list.

According to party sources, Sikandar Bakht had recently proposed former Mayor Rajender Gupta's name for the position of chief minister. Some people also wanted to discuss Sahib Singh Verma's name. He had support from some of the second level of RSS leaders. However, the BJP high command and the RSS leaders refused even to discuss his candidacy. Later, he lost his importance when names for tickets were selected. According to sources, no agreement was made about his running from Shalimar Bagh from where he desires to run.

The leaders who have popular support are: Ram Bhaj from Sarojini Nagar, Mewa Ram Arya from Patel Nagar, Purnima Sethi from Kalkaji, Rajesh Sharma from Hauz Khas, Karan Singh Tanwar from Delhi Cantonment, Rajender Gupta from Malviya Nagar, and Begum Khursheed Kidwai from Matia Mahal. If Mr. Khurana is asked to run for elections in the beginning, he would be given the Moti Nagar seat. Otherwise, this seat can be given to Nand Kishore Garg. There is also talk about keeping him at a high position in Delhi Municipal Corporation. The same plan is being considered for Shanti Desai. It is believed that Prof. Kohli has agreed to give the ticket for Nazafgarh seat to Sahib Singh Verma. This proposal in the election committee was presented by him. The party had decided to give the ticket for Kamla Nagar seat to Charti Lal Goyal. The media chief of the party, P.K. Chandala, can be given ticket for the Shakur Basti seat

Congress (I)

* UP Congress Leaders Reportedly Angered by Pawar Remarks

93AS1033K Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 13 Jul 93 p 1

[Text] New Delhi, July 12—The Maharashtra chief minister, Mr Sharad Pawar's remark that the Congress(I) should keep away from the Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh and instead support other secular parties to keep the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] from power has shocked partymen from the state.

The AICC [All India Congress Committee] spokesman, Mr V.N. Gadgil, described Mr Pawar's suggestion as "premature" since Assembly elections in the state are yet to be announced. He was of the view that the chief minister's suggestion amounted to "thinking aloud."

However, the timing of the remark caused a degree of surprise in party circles since the Prime Minister, Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao, has during the past few days had extensive consultations with senior leaders from Uttar Pradesh on how to revive the party for the Assembly polls.

Mr Rao has also addressed two well attended public meetings in the state which he is scheduled to visit a number of times in the coming weeks.

Partymen from Uttar Pradesh are left wondering how a veteran politician like Mr Pawar can speak of the Congress(I) "politically sacrificing" Uttar Pradesh. "Is this the same Mr Pawar who has been nursing prime ministerial ambitions? How can he now think of excluding Uttar Pradesh from the party's calculations?" a former state minister said. "Yeh to Pawar ney hamaarey muh say roti

cheenney ki baat kar di (Pawar is now talking about snatching the bread from our mouths)," he added.

In the assessment of the Uttar Pradesh partymen, the Maharashtra heavyweight probably had the Samajwadi Party leader, Mr Mulayam Singh Hadav, in mind when he spoke of the need to back secular forces.

So far, the understanding among Uttar Pradesh Congressmen is that even if some kind of alliance is forged with Mr Yadav, it would only be in areas where he has a strong base. "We will not allow anyone to hand over Uttar Pradesh to the non-BJP Opposition on a platter," a PCC [Pradesh Congress Committee] office-bearer said.

Another leader, perceived to be close to the former chief minister, Mr Narayan Dutt Tewari, said Mr Pawar's remarks reflected the "attitude of neglect" among the top leadership after the party's successive electoral defeats in 1989 and 1991.

Party sources said the only central leader who had in the past underlined the importance of Uttar Pradesh in the party's over-all political calculations was Mr Arjun Singh. It was only now that Mr Rao had woken up to the importance of the state.

There is also a section in the party which feels that Mr Pawar is back to his old game of hedging his bets. This section recalls how Mr Pawar had "ditched" the Congress(I) and cobbled together the Progressive Democratic Front [PDF] to become chief minister.

"Is he now thinking of a similar gameplan in the scenario which could surface after the next general elections by humouring the non-BJP Opposition?" a known Pawar rival remarked.

* Congress (I) Failure Forecast in Uttar Pradesh

93AS1114A Varanasi AJ in Hindi 28 Jul 93 p 6

[Article by Dr. Baldevraj Gupta: "Uttar Pradesh: Congress Has no Agenda"]

[Text] We cannot say whether the Kashi and Mathura temples issue is included in the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] agenda. However, in the context of the four vidhan sabha elections scheduled for this winter, it is clear that Uttar Pradesh in not included in the Congress (I) agenda. Is this being done under some policy? Or is it a strategy to reduce the north Indian monopoly? Or perhaps, it is a part of a long-term strategy of the Congress Party to purify itself before competing alone with the BJP? Taking out Congress from Uttar Pradesh would weaken its position in northern India, Congress itself and Sonia Gandhi's future political career.

Pranab Follows Shard

Congress President P.V. Narasimha Rao removed Pranab Mukherji from his cabinet after having T.N. Sheshan stop the West Bengal elections. This Bengali babu used to be number two in the Indira Gandhi cabinet at one time. At that time, Narasimha Rao ranked below fifth or sixth position. Pranab has been given the responsibility to form the Congress election strategy in the four former BJP states now under presidential rule. He was appointed the head of the Congress election committee. Kesari Sahib wanted this position like a lion wanted to hunt; however, he had to be satisfied with being a member of the committee. Pranab began to speak Sharad Yadav's language as soon as he became the head of the election committee, but with a Bengali accent. He supported forming an anti-BJP secular front by the Congress Party.

Pranab's History

A decade ago, we saw then-Madhya Pradesh chief minister, Arjun Singh, running after the 57-year-old Pranab Mukherji on the Jabbalpur air strip. Rajiv Gandhi had expelled Pranab from the Congress Party in 1987. It was then this diminutive man knew about his height. A student of history and politics and a teacher by profession, Pranab always talked from point to point. He is from Banal's virbhumi region, therefore, always returns to talk about socialism. He was in the Bengal state Congress Party first. Later, he formed the National Socialist Congress Party. When the door to the Congress Party opened again, he broke up his own party to join it. He blew out the socialism he was following like a smoke from a pipe. Out of his habit, he likes to stay close to number one in the party. He can also see fine points because of his thick glasses.

Pranab the Change Agent

He favors change that occurs in a timely manner. He always had a deep understanding of various sides. He changes himself and policies accordingly. He speaks an impressive Bangla and very good English. He talks using facts and figures. He is ambitious, but does not have his grassroots anywhere. Therefore, he wanted to become a Rajya Sabha member. However, Sheshan closed even that door. When he became worried, Mr. Rao gave him the necessary support. He was appointed the head of the election committee. However, in the most populated state—the crowded jungle—of UP [Uttar Pradesh]. Here also he looked for number one after whom he could pit the Congress Party. The Congress Party is not a baby or was not allowed to be one. What will Congress do for elections in Uttar Pradesh? Pranab Mukherjee got a pointer through the Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar. "The Congress should not run for elections in UP and should help the opposition against the BJP." Pranab took this advice to heart.

The first anti-BJP project given to Pranab Kumar Mukherjee was to strengthen the unity of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh and to fill up all the chasms within the party immediately. He knows that the BJP is the most powerful and number one party in these states. The BJP is the number one political enemy of the Congress here. The first project of Pranab should be to trounce the BJP, and that must be done effectively. Pranab considers Sharad's advice as a big help.

The Lion Kills and the Wolf Eats

The advice given is that the Congress form a front of secular forces and this front should work toward defeating the BJP that symbolizes fundamentalist Hinduism and

communalism. In exchange for helping defeat BJP, the Congress would let the non-BJP opposition parties run for elections.

Pranab Mukherjee needed another point to carry out this project. He needs the number one leader. He found a lion in this state of crowded jungle. This is the leading opposition party and is also a socialist group. Therefore, Pranab got his point. The Congress wants to run the election war in Uttar Pradesh against the BJP through Mulayam Singh. However, it is very difficult to say how far this "capitalist" Brahman will be successful in caging this socialist lion. Waiting for the Green Flag.

If necessary, Pranab is willing to ask for help from the Samajwadi Party's head Mulayam Singh. However, he has to first get permission from Narasimha Rao, the party president, and the Congress Working Committee. Meanwhile, Mulayam Singh considers his relations with the Congress Party to be confrontational. He says, "How can the attitude of us socialists be soft toward the Congress? However, I am willing to unite in efforts to fight communalism." According to prominent thinker and moviemaker Muzaffar Ali, Mulayam Singh Yadav is the only hope against communalism in India.

Congress Strengthened With Vora's Arrival

It is true that the Congress has lost its resolution in Uttar Pradesh. All its members are disappointed. Its leadership is depressed and slighted. Narayan Dutt Tiwari has been removed. Meanwhile, the relationship between the Congress leadership and the people has broken down. Governor Motilal Vora has managed to make the aged Congress Party to sit up in bed with "some oxygen and vitamins of economic assistance." [passage omitted]

* Tiwari Interviewed on Congress (I) Prospects in UP

93LA0189B Madras FRONTLINE in English 27 Aug 93 p 34

[Interview with Narain Dutt Tiwari by Venkitesh Ramakrishnan: "Communalism Subsiding"]

[Excerpts] There are many in the Congress (I) circles in Delhi, and they include senior leaders, who consider Narain Dutt Tiwari the dark horse in the race for the top post. In recent months his name has come up for discussion within the party as contender for the post of either Prime Minister or party president. For a leader who failed to retain his seat in the last Assembly elections and has shown a studied indifference to intra-party politicking, this standing in the eyes of colleagues is somewhat surprising. **Venkitesh Ramakrishnan** interviewed him in Uttar Pradesh.

How do you analyze the political situation in the State?

Public opinion in the State is in a mood of deep contemplation. The intensely emotionally-charged atmosphere is giving way to a more rational and cool-headed approach. The question that has come to the fore in this situation is whether the religious emotionalism of a segment of the population would help to meet the socio- economic political requirements of the State as a whole. As a resuslt of this thought process, the mass churning out of potentially volatile ideas has somewhat subsided. Till a few months ago, people were thinking that religious emotionalism would prevail. That situation is no longer there. People are more concerned with developmental issues now.

How far has the Congress (I) as a party and you as an individual been able to influence this atmosphere?

I have been underlining the issue of development since last year. I had undertaken a vikas yatra from Nainital last year and I am continuing with the work this year by organizing vikas sabhas. In these yatras and sabhas, local development issues are taken up. The party is also actively involved in this process. A change in the organizational set-up of the State party, brought about under my initiative, has helped the functioning on these lines. We have replaced the polling booth-level electoral organizational concept with the "gram congress" concept. This helps the party take up developmental issues with greater efficiency.

But there are reports to the effect that the party's grassroots-level workers are facing a lot of difficulties in taking up this development agenda.

I have been insisting on political meditation. This would impart dynamism to our thinking. So, the difficulties that you mention are being faced as part of this process. These difficulties have led to the more important question of looking at the evolution of our country as a whole. And to study the evolution of the country we have to look outside the country. We have to see what Europe is doing; what China is doing. We have to see how a socialist market economy is evolving in China. We have to see whether we have to study something from there. Just saying that we have to merge with the global economy is not enough. We have to study things in a composite manner and evolve our own economic model. Just saying that we will be competitive is not enough. Our approach should be one of integrating industrial development with development of backward areas and states with special emphasis on special problems.

What you are hinting at is a rethinking of the new economic policy.

I am not asking for rethinking. I am asking for added thinking. Or let us say about filling the gaps in the new economic policy. What I am saying is that we cannot have a uniform policy. There are backward areas and backward areas. Each has to get different and, at times, contrasting forms of attention. In such an approach nothing would be ruled out. Subsidy need not be anathema. In regions like Wales and Scotland subsidy for agriculture continues to exist. Even in the new Clinton program in the U.S. there is subsidy. What is important is to have small islands of economic activity that generate employment.

How far is the Central leadership open to these suggestions?

This is all part of the thinking at the Central leadership level. The Tirupati session of the AICC has clearly given directions on these lines.

In case this added thinking does not become a reality in the near future, how successful would the party be in U.P. in putting development back on the socio-political agenda?

The party has been successful in putting development back on the agenda. We have achieved tremendous success in this effort.

Despite this, some Central leaders like Sharad Pawar have suggested that the party desist from contesting the elections and support secular parties that have a winning chance.

I don't think they have said this. Sharad Pawar has publicly denied the alleged statement. I suppose the question does not need comment.

But what do you think? Will the party go in for electoral adjustments with other centrist parties?

Even in its heyday the Congress made adjustments with parties like the CPI. We have to see that communal forces do not get the upper hand. Let us see how we can prevent a division of secular votes.

A complaint has arisen from all the recent efforts of the Congress (I) to rejuvenate itself. It is that the party has used the Governor's administration, especially in the transfer of civil servants, to bolster its standing...

This complaint about transfers has been coming up right from the 1940s. I do not think the present allegation is correct. All the same, if earlier transfers have been politically motivated, even a rectification is bound to lead to a hue and cry.

What is the party's position on the Ayodhya imbroglio now?

Should I say anything about it? I suppose we should all wait for the Supreme Court verdict.

* Congress Seen Lagging in Uttar Pradesh

94AS0047C Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 2 Oct 93 p 4

[Article by Mahesh Rangarajan]

[Text] Lucknow, Oct 1—The exclusion of the creamy layer among backward classes from reservations has not made a major difference in political equations in Uttar Pradesh, but it may have an impact in the future. The Congress had hoped that the announcement of reservations on September 8 would draw support from backward classes. The measure could also have divided the backwards comprising 27 per cent of the electorate into groups.

However, a senior state leader admitted that things were not so simple. "Our base among these groups has always been weak, and it is the upper caste (suvarna) Hindus and the Scheduled Castes who had stood by us," he said.

The party's other drawback is its weak organisational base. The leader said: "We could have shown other groups that we were bringing about gradual rather than drastic change, but our machinery is weak."

The PCC has not met since February. Leaders like Mr Kalpnath Rai and Mr N.D. Tiwari have organised public meetings, but the party has not taken the initiative. Moreover, there are parallel district committees in at least 22 districts.

The Sitaram Kesri thesis that the Congress could woo backwards and get them into its fold cannot even be given a fair trial due to the party's poor machinery.

The BJP also hopes to divide the backwards by insisting on a further differentiation of the "extremely backward classes" from the rest. The BJP state unit president, Mr Kalraj Mishra, said this was "an attempt to increase social cohesion by helping the weak without increasing social strife."

Yet the ideology of the sangh combine meshes well with hard political reality. A party worker admitted that "it is groups other than the Yadavs who are with us in large numbers. He quickly added, "Many Yadavs are also with our party."

The BJP has several backward class leaders including Mr Kalyan Singh, Mr Vinay Katiyar of the Bajrang Dal and Mrs Premlata Katiyar, but the bid is to emphasise the ideology of Hindutva.

Mr Kalyan Singh pointed out that the party has made inroads into the old base of Mr Charan Singh who began the process of polarisation on caste lines. The former chief minister claimed that his meeting at Baghpat early this month "was the largest-ever held in the town."

The BJP's reliance on the suvarna Hindu vote has to be balanced against the need to attract the backward classes. A senior leader claimed that the composition of the state leadership had to be balanced "in order to maintain the social equation."

At the same time, the party has strongly supported the proposal to reserve 10 per cent of the jobs for the upper caste poor. The concept of the creamy layer, and further differentiation of the backward classes is thus in the interests of the BJP. Its main plank remains the Ram temple card, which changes the equation between Hindus and Muslims.

It is the Janata Dal which relies the most on the Mandal card. Mr V.P. Singh dismissed the attempt of the Congress to take credit for Mandal. "It is like a clerk trying to take the credit for passing a file which he delayed for over two years," he quipped.

The former Prime Minister claims to have evoked a good response on his recent tour of east Uttar Pradesh. "In Ghazipur, over a lakh of people were there, as many as in 1989. The crowd was a different one, mainly of rural youth not the townspeople," he said.

The Mandal issue is central to the appeal of the Janata Dal, but its impact should not be overstated. One crucial factor that polarised backward class opinion in the past was the scale of the anti-Mandal movement. This time, it is different.

Two students tried to immolate themselves in Lucknow on Saturday and both are still in hospital. But the reaction has been muted. As one student said, "Its all over now. Why waste our time on this?"

Moreover, the Mandal issue has opened up ground for backward class leaders, not all from the Janata Dal. Mr V.P. Singh obliquely admitted this when he said, "The change in the composition of party leaderships is part of the wider process of a social revolution."

As a Congressman put it, "It is Mulayam who is at home in the new context." However, Mr V.P. Singh cannot be totally written off.

The picture thus is a mixed one. The Congress has to hone its message and reach out more effectively if it wants to gain any mileage from the decision on Mandal. But it has to get new votes without losing more ground among the forward castes.

* Tiwari Seen Unable to Push Congress in Uttar Pradesh

94AS0046L Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 5 Oct 93 p 6

[Article by Mahesh Rangarajan]

[Text] Hardoi, Oct. 4—The veteran Congress(I) leader, Mr N.D. Tiwari, blamed the Opposition for having failed to "promote progress" and asked voters to rally behind the Congress(I) and overcome caste and communal divisions.

Addressing a gathering on his vikas yatra here, he said, "The state's development has suffered for over three years. Several development projects initiated by the Congress(i) government before 1989 have been stalled."

He warned that continued rule by parties based on communal and caste vote-banks would ruin the state. "No one will invest here as long as there is strife."

Mr Tiwari's motorcade was stopped at regular intervals by party's supporters and workers shouting slogans: "Vikas ke path, par chalo, badh chalo (move ahead on the development path)."

Though Mr Tiwari continues to have a reservoir of goodwill within and outside the party, the dilemma confronting the Congress(I) is a serious one. "Our state unit has to fight an ideologically committed, cadre-based rival and may have to be content with fourth place," admitted a veteran party worker.

He alluded to recent international developments in his speech, saying "if we do not respect our minorities who will respect us?"

The former chief minister condemned caste-based politics and asked the Scheduled Caste voters to reject "those who only want one caste to fight the other."

He claimed that the Congress(I) had always worked to "protect the interests of the weaker sections." He said Dr Ambedkar's role was being misrepresentated by opponents of the party. "Do not forget that Ambedkar and Panditji worked together in the same Cabinet."

The response to Mr Tiwari's yatra was a mixed one. Though a Congress(I) stronghold, the party remains a divided house at Hardoi. An organiser went so far as to publicly warn Mr Tiwari: "This is not 1980 or 1984. The right candidate must be selected." The speaker was championing the cause of the local block pramukh, Mr Virendra Singh Chauhan.

At one point, Mr Tiwari felt constrained to warn that, "the real ticket that matters is the one that guarantees the country's future."

* 'Confusion, Desperation' Said to Characterize Congress in UP

94AS0062C Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 15 Oct 93 p 4

[Text] Lucknow, Oct. 14—Confusion and desperation have replaced the euphoria in the state Congress(I) camp because despite the massive rally here on Saturday, regional satraps are reluctant to bury the hatchet.

With the Assembly elections drawing near, the infighting within the party seems to [be] gathering momentum.

The rally has also thrown up new power groups, causing more headaches for those wishing to contain the internine feud.

The initial euphoria after the overwhelming response to the rally stemmed from the fact that the Congress(I) could compete with and even outdo the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] in terms of mobilisation of manpower and resources, proving that the party still retains a formidable support base in the region.

However, the joy proved to be shortlived, for as soon as the Prime Minister, Mr P.V. Narashimha Rao, left for Delhi, a virtual war of recrimination began in the state unit. This has also disheartened the party workers, who were jubilant because their rally had dwarfed, even those organised by Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party led by Mr Kanshi Ram.

But instead of consolidating its base, party leaders like the Union food and civil supplies minister, Mr Kalpanath Rai, started running down the state Congress president, Mr Mahabir Prasad, claiming he was responsible for the rally's success. The bitter bickering has also led to the sidelines of the party stalwart in the state, Mr N.D. Tiwari.

But on the face of it, the successful Congress(I) rally is being viewed with concern by the other political parties, particularly the BJP, whose leaders privately admit that the massive mobilisation showed that the Congress had the power to take on the might of Hindutva head on.

Even other non-Congress(I) leaders in the state feel that the party was the only one capable of giving the BJP a run for its money in Uttar Pradesh. With the Samajwadi Party stressing on Mandal and social justice, the resulting caste Hindus, traditionally Congress(I) voters till the Hindutva wave in 1991, may again vote for the party.

And with the BSP still undecided over supporting Mr Mulayam Singh, all that the Congress needs is good

political management to win over the Harijans. The running conflict between the intermediary castes and the Harijans, which is likely to prove a major impediment to a possible alliance between Mr Kanshi Ram and Mr Mulayam Singh, is also likely to benefit the Congress.

The Congress(I) rally, which attracted more than twice the number of people at the Samajwadi Party and BSP rallies, thus assumes significance. Though Mr Rao's speech lacked the strident rusticity which characterise today's political discourses, he made it very clear that he was willing to take on the BJP with no holds barred. But he has to set his own house in order first.

* Further Congress Decline Seen in Uttar Pradesh

94AS0068F Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 24 Oct 93 p 7

[Article by Mohan Sahay: "The Decline of Congress (I) in Uttar Pradesh"]

[Text] Lucknow, Oct. 23—The declining popularity of the Congress(I) in the Hindi heartland, once the bastion of the ruling party, in the past elections has put a serious question mark on its national character. The Congress(I) had never fared so badly in the cowbelt. Despite its poor performance in the Lok Sabha and the Assembly elections in 1989 and 1991, the Congress(I) appears to be suffering from a lack of will to stage a comeback. The party leadership, however, has realized that without electoral support from the North, the Congress(I) can hardly expect to retain its hegemony at the Centre.

In the State of Uttar Pradesh, the party literally swept the State Assembly elections in 1952, 1957 and 1962 by polling 48, 42.4 and 36.3 percent respectively of the total votes. The corresponding all-India performance in the first three general elections to the Lok Sabha also showed the Congress(I) getting 45, 47.8 and 44.77 percent of the total votes polled, bagging almost two-thirds of the seats in Parliament.

The party's fortune was on the wane in 1967, 1969, 1974 and 1977 in the Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, when its margin of votes slided down between 36 to 31 percent. There was a sudden rise in 1980 and 1985 when it polled 37.7 and 39.3 percent. However, it never reached the 40 percent mark.

Accordingly, there was a fall in the percentage of votes polled in the Lok Sabha elections (all-India figure) in the years 1967, 1971 and 1977 which came down to 40.8, 41.3 and 34.5, respectively despite the party's continued gain in the South. The 1980 and 1984 Lok Sabha elections were exceptions when the Congress(I) fortune experienced an upswing. The party again nosedived in 1989 and 1991 though it was able to form a Government at the Centre.

The language of statistics can not be taken as a predictable trend for the future, but it gives an insight how the party's fortune is linked with the performance in the Hindi heartland.

It augurs well for a party which was literally wiped out in the 1991 Lok Sabha elections and was a third force in the Assembly, when a leader like Mr Narain Dutt Tewari says that in spite of the Mandir and Mandal waves that determined the outcome of the two previous elections, the Congress(I) never lost its base, which always stood by the party. And the base vote is 22 percent of the total electorate. A mere eight percent swing in its favour would put the Congress(I) at number one position and may be just short of a majority in the House of 425 MLAs [Member of Legislative Assembly].

Mr Tewari, however, forgets that even during the anti-Congress(I) wave in 1977, the party in Uttar Pradesh secured fairly high percentage of votes—31.9 and yet was able to win only 47 seats. The Janata Party with 47.8 percent had bagged 352 seats. In a reverse performance in 1982, when the Congress(I) had polled 47.9 percent it had won 390 seats. A mere difference of 0.01 percent between the performance of the Janata Party in 1977 and that of the Congress(I) in 1982 had a difference of 38 seats. What matters for the parties is the splitting of votes between the major contestants.

The poll performance of different parties in the 1991 Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, show how the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] benefited by the splitting of votes between the Congress(I), the Janata Dal, the Samajvadi Janata Party [SJP] and the Bahujan Samaj Party of Kanshi Ram. Together the four parties polled 41.03 percent of votes winning 179 seats against the BJP's 211 seats with 33.01 percent polled votes.

The situation appears similar this time with the BJP arrayed against the Congress(I), the Janata Dal and the Samajvadi Party-BSP [Bahujan Samaj Party] combined.

Janata Dal

* Ajit Singh Seen Losing Support of Followers

93AS1094B Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 31 Jul 93 p 7

[Article by Bishakha De Sarkar and Prabha Jagannathan: "Ajit Fails To Live Up to His Father's Legacy"]

[Text] Choudhary Charan Singh looks on benignly as Ajit Singh spells out his campaign tour of western Uttar Pradesh. The portrait of the former Prime Minister, placed prominently in his son's office, looms behind him, as always, larger than life.

Ajit Singh, never one to be out of the political limelight for long, is back in the news. Despite leading a group of just 20 MPs, his party's stand on the no-confidence motion against the government had, for more than a fortnight, kept both the Congress and the Opposition on tenderhooks. And amid all the speculation on whether or not the former industries minister would vote against the government, Ajit Singh remained unperturbed, quietly wielding power. In the no-trust vote, Mr Ajit Singh voted against the government, but seven of his party members split and helped to bail out the Congress.

But if Ajit Singh has occupied the centrestage of politics in New Delhi, power is slowly trickling out of his hands back

home in Baghpat. Though Ajit Singh is still the leader of his constituency—his stronghold has been going through a series of changes in political affiliations, causing minor quakes in the region. "The old voting blocks are in trouble," admits Ajit Singh.

In an area known for its three-decade long, strong anti-Congress sentiments, V. P. Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav are today dirty words for the Jats of the region. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has come in and appropriated a solid chunk of the Jat vote. And though not as strong as it seemed two years ago, the party still has a considerable presence in the region.

Despite the changes, for the villagers Ajit Singh is still the only leader of the region, though his base has been considerably eroded. Many seek to point out that the scion of the son of soil no longer has the same hold over the people. "People still vote for him because of his father," says Satpal Malik, another prominent Jat of the region who was close to Charan Singh.

"But now there is growing resentment against Ajit Singh because he is not inspiring enough. There are many others, after all, who have had a prominent father or a grandfather and who are nowhere today," says Malik, who recently joined hands with Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav.

That Charan Singh, even years after his death, is considered the leader of the region is highlighted by the pride the villagers take in the simple fact that he belonged to western Uttar Pradesh. A farmer recounts that Charan Singh stood up against Jawaharlal Nehru on the issue of cooperatives. A college principal recalls that the zamindari abolition legislation initiated by Charan Singh in Uttar Pradesh was one of the most progressive laws of the state. A teacher traces his movement from a Jat leader to a national leader.

But while people took pride in the fact that Charan Singh, a leader of the old mould, never did much for his constituency, this very trait in his son has come in for criticism, and is taking away a section of the traditional Lok Dal voters. People, especially the young, have started to resent the fact that there are no good roads in Baghpat and adjoining areas and that, despite a government sanction, work on a sugar mill in the region is still to start.

"Ajit Singh seldom visits his constituency," says Dharmendra Choudhary, a student and resident of Chhaprauli. "No wonder the community—especially the young—have started demanding a change in the politics of the region," he says.

Little wonder then that a sizeable section of the Jats turned to the BJP in the last election. "There was a vacuum, and the BJP filled that," says Mr Mahak Singh, principal of the Barot Degree College and the former Janata Dal (A) MLA from Chhaprauli. But, asserts Mr Ajit Singh, the "Ram Lehar" is no longer blowing, and Kalyan Singh has "flopped" as a chief minister. "The BJP is no longer such a major factor now. Let's not forget that the Dal together got the highest percentage of votes in the area," he says.

Apart from the younger generation, Ajit Singh's party also shows signs of losing the support of Muslims, who, along with the Jats, constituted Charan Singh's main plank. Mahrup, a Muslim peasant of Kandhla village adjoined Barot, has a litany of complaints to relate about the Jats.

Despite all this, they all add that during the elections, their vote, in all probability, will go to none other than Ajit Singh. "This was his father's 'samabhoomi,'" says Attar Singh of Chhaprauli, "and this region is the Choudhary's gift to his son. How can we not support him?"

BSP

• BSP Condemns Janata Dal, V.P. Singh Politics

94AS0047J Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 20 Sep 93 p 8

[Text] Bhopal, Sept. 19—In a massive show of strength, the Bahujan Samaj Party displayed its growing power in Madhya Pradesh with a large rally in Bhopal on Sunday. But its president, Mr Kanshi Ram, surprisingly hit out against the former Prime Minister, Mr V.P. Singh, accusing him of taking the weaker sections for a ride by championing the cause of reservation.

A crowd of over fifty thousand braved a driving rain to listen to their leader at the culmination of the cycle rallies which were launched on August 15 at eleven places in the state and covered every road in the state before converging at Bhopal.

Mr Kanshi Ram said the state BSP president, Mr Dauram Ratnakar, was conspicuous by his absence as he had been detained along with 155 other activists in the Bilaspur jail for the last two months for organising protests against the rape of five women in the district in January last. He said the Prime Minister, Mr Narasimha Rao, had invited him for talks on the Bilaspur issue two months back but had not carried out his promise to release Mr Ratnakar. "This suits us fine because the longer Ratnakar stays in jail, the better will be the election prospects for the BSP," he said.

Mr Kanshi Ram, however, reserved most of his speech for Mr V.P. Singh who, he said, was trying to project himself as a messiah of the weaker castes. "We should be beware of such persons who are again trying to use us for gaining power," he said.

Mr Kanshi Ram said Mr Singh was now adopting new stunts by announcing that he will not return to Delhi till the reservation for OBC's was put into practice. "Why does he not tour Orissa which has a Janata Dal chief minister who openly says he will not implement the report," he asked. He said Mr V.P. Singh had never shown any love for the weaker sections when he was chief minister of Uttar Pradesh and later in the Union Cabinet of Ms Indira Gandhi and Mr Rajiv Gandhi. Only after rebelling against the Congress, he had found that wooing the backward sections was the best way to climb to power.

Mr Kanshi Ram reminded the gathering that for several years they had been taken for a ride by the political parties who want to persist with the caste system. "You have 90 per cent of the votes and yet you have never used it

judiciously, instead you have allowed yourself to be used by only ten per cent of the population which enjoys power at your expense," he said.

Significantly, an independent MLA of the dissolved Assembly Mr Arif Aqueel, who represented the prestigious Bhopal (north) seat, garlanded Mr Kanshi Ram at the public meeting.

Demolition

Jamshedpur (UNI)—Tisco security personnel along with the police demolished 30 houses in the Bhuinadih area under Sitaramdera police station here on Saturday.

* BSP 'Vote Bank' Seen Challenged in Uttar Pradesh

94AS0059D New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 15 Oct 93 p 2

[Article by Hemant Sharma: "The Minorities Are Being Drawn Away From BSP in Uttar Pradesh"]

[Text] Lucknow, 14 October. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is declining now, however, its presence will spoil the votes for other parties in the coming election. After getting support from 9 to 10 percent of the low caste votes, Kanshi Ram has not closed the doors to a possible agreement with the Congress (I). The BSP election figures in this state after 1985 indicate that the BSP support has declined since the last election. The BSP influence had slowly increased from April 1984 when it was first formed until 1989. This came to a standstill during the 1991 election. At present the popularity graph of the BSP is declining.

For example, in the 13 vidhan sabha seats where the BSP had registered victories in 1989, it could salvage only one seat in 1991 election. In 1989, it had 13 legislators elected. This number went down to 12 in 1991. In 1989, the BSP was number two party with 36 seats, and in 1991 it was number two with 32 seats. In 1989, the 146 BSP candidates were number three, and after the '91 Rama wave, it had only 127 candidates and was in the third position. In 1989, its received 9.33 of the total votes. This share fell a little in '91. It should be known that in 1989, only 373 BSP candidates had participated in the election, while there were 387 candidates in '91. Because of this vote arithmetic and the falling graph of popularity, Kanshi Ram had joined forces with Mulayam Singh. Until now, he had fought all elections alone in this state.

Half of the BSP vote bank was lost in the Mandal hurricane and the communal riots. One reason for the falling support for Kanshi Ram is his contradictory statements over coalitions and agreements and his wheelings and dealings over low caste votes. The BSP has a good base in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bundelkhand. It does not exist in western Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Among the Harijans in eastern Uttar pradesh, only the Chamars among the Harijans are BSP supporters. This time, other backward castes and Ansari Muslims are not with the BSP. The Muslim supported the BSP until '91 in large numbers. That is why, from among the 13 seats the BSP won, five were occupied by Muslim legislators. Until this election, Kanshi Ram had joined the minorities with the Harijans. Kanshi Ram had increased this base by stealing from the Congress (I). In 1989, from among those who made it to the vidhan sabha on the BSP tickets, five belonged to minority groups, five were Harijans, and the remaining three were from backward groups. This ratio clarified Kanshi Ram's caste equation. In this election, the whole BSP role is to hurt the Janata Dal and the Congress (I).

Kanshi Ram never had a hold on the reserved vidhan sabha seats. The BSP has always been weak in reserved seat districts because the high caste voters do not play decisive role here. In 1989, the BSP had won 5 of the 93 reserved seats, however, in '91 it could win only one such seat. Shyam Nandan, organizing secretary of the state BJP, said that "the BSP in itself is not a force. It won only when the backward classes supported it. The backward vote is not with it now; it is with us. Therefore, its possibilities are decreasing."

The division over religious communities that occurred after 1989 in Uttar Pradesh proved to be most damaging to the BSP. The riots that spread all over the state and the communal tension that followed snatched away BSP votes. There was a large number of Muslims who deserted the BSP. Kanshi Ram clearly said in the Lucknow rally that he can form his government without the Muslims. They should not be misunderstand and the Muslim leaders should stop their wheelings and dealings.

Raj Bahadur, the BSP state president, said, "Our vote bank is solid. We are in the position to form the government with Mulayam Singh's cooperation. We have our own methods of election propaganda. Our party structure function through night meetings and local organizations. This time we will let our presence known in the Terai region and western Uttar Pradesh." Mulayam Singh and the Congress (I) had their eyes on this BSP vote bank since 1989. At that time, both had knocked at the BSP door for some agreement, however, nothing came out of it. The Dalit, Muslim, and backward class votes have brought Mulayam Singh closer to Kanshi Ram. Because of his political problems, Mulayam Singh is willing to accept whatever Kanshi Ram says.

Kanshi Ram is practicing the post-election politics during this election. He wants to make the BSP the "balancing power." Kanshi Ram had announced on 14 April 1989 when the BSP was founded that, "We are in the election arena just to help give balance to the government after the victory." Kanshi Ram had also merged his two non-political groups—DS-4 and Boysafe—into the BSP for this purpose. The BSP joined the vidhan sabha election for the first time in 1984-85. However, it had no success and received only 2.66 percent votes. Later in 1985, the BSP let its presence known first in Bijnaur and then in Haridwar elections. The BSP became a menace for the Congress (I) because it stole the traditional vote bank—the Dalits and the backward classes—from the Congress (I). The number of votes that the BSP received in the 1984 Lok Sabha election and the 1985 vidhan sabha election were more than the Republican Party got in this state in all the elections held since 1971. Even though the BSP had received only 2.66 percent of the total votes in 1985, it had managed to stop Congress (I) victory in 35 districts.

The BSP gave a very bad time to well-respected Harijan leader Jagjivan Ram's daughter Mira Kumar in the Bijnaur bye-election. Mira Kumar managed to defeat Lok Dal's Ram Vilas Paswan by only 6,000 votes. Meanwhile, Mayavati with 61,000 votes came out number three. In the 1987 bye-election in Haridwar, Mayavati had to face Ram Vilas Paswan again. In this election, the Congress (I) received 149,000 votes and Mayavati was runner up with 125,000 votes. Ram Vilas Paswan was number three here. Soon after this, Mayavati ran for election from Bijnaur and won. In this election, the BSP had decisive victories in 32 Lok Sabha seats. It received 9.33 percent votes in vidhan sabha election. This BSP was at its apex at this time. The election results in 1991 were not encouraging for the BSP. Its popularity graph began to decline after that. Now, the BSP is trying to recapture the backward class votes with Mulayam Singh. Kanshi Ram does not have an aggressive voice this time because of cooperation with Mulayam Singh.

* Kalyan Singh Said to Face Tough Fight To Regain Seat

94AS0067D Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 21 Oct 93 p 1

[Text] New Delhi, Oct. 20—The non-BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] parties, including the Congress(I), are likely to reach an understanding on fielding a single candidate at Atrauli from where the former chief minister, Mr Kalyan Singh, will contest the forthcoming polls.

While the Congress(I), the unified Janata Dal and the Samajwadi Party will be slugging it out among themselves for all the other 424 seats, any candidate fielded against Mr Kalyan Singh at Atrauli is expected to be the cynosure of all eyes in terms of sheer publicity.

The candidate has not yet been finalised, though the name of a journalist from Hindi daily is reportedly being considered.

Janata Dal sources revealed here today that Congress leaders were in touch with them on this issue. The Congress(I) is expected to field Mr Nek Ram Lodha, from the same community as Mr Kalyan Singh, from Atrauli.

However, if all three non-BJP contenders arrive at a consensus on a single candidate in time, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister will have to fight a single candidate in his constituency.

Janata Dal leaders have also approached Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav on this issue, who has not yet given his nod. "We hope this works out," a senior Janata Dal leader said, adding, "We may have to work a little harder on the Samajwadi Party chief."

Mr Ajit Singh, convenor of the Janata Dal's apex panel, also hinted that his party was not averse to accepting the name of either a Samajwadi Party or a Congress candidate, who would put up a "good fight" against Mr Kalyan Singh.

The fight for Atrauli is significant since Mr Kalyan Singh, a Lodha, has won the seat seven times; losing it only once, in 1980. In 1991, the former chief minister won this seat of 70,000 Hindus and 1.5 lakh Muslims by a margin of 28,000 votes.

The Congress has always fielded Muslims from this constituency. The BJP now fears that if the Congress chooses to file an OBC candidate this time, it may result in the splitting of Atrauli's Hindu votes, disadvantaging Mr Kalyan Singh.

Mr Kalyan Singh is not in a position to change his seat fearing that it would send out wrong signals to other parties and to the OBCs if the BJP's chief ministerial candidates moved out. It is with this in mind that he rejected ideas of contesting from neighbouring Debai—yet another Lodha-dominated seat.

To his disadvantage, Atrauli's electorate is reportedly not satisfied with Mr Kalyan Singh. While Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav has been credited with improving the lot of voters in Jaswantnagar, Atrauli, where Mr Singh owns a house, is in much the same poor state.

SJP

* Mulayam Singh Seen Cultivating New Image in UP

93LA0189E Bombay THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA in English 20 Aug 93 p 7

[Article by Saibal Dasgupta: "The Turncoat?"]

[Text] Who would imagine that "Maulana Mulayam", the redoubtable former UP chief minister, would bring a bunch of sadhus to a news conference, send his Samajwadi Party workers to godman Chandra Swami's *som yagna* in Ayodhya, and publicly defend the prime minister in the Harshad Mehta affair even while insisting that the Congress is the fountainhead of corruption.

Just two years back, the same man had staked his chief ministership to block the entry of *kar sevaks* into Ayodhya and earned the sobriquet of an 'anti-Hindu' who understood Muslims better than he did his co-religionists.

And just four months back, when his Samajwadi Party entered into an alliance with Kansi Ram's Bahu,an Samaj Party—giving rise to stories that he might join hands with V.P. Singh—Mulayam Singh declared that he could make friends with the devil in order to defeat the demon—the BJP. So typical of the man who likes to give the impression of being a dare-devil political adventurist while remaining cool and calculating.

Mulayam Singh no longer insists on building a mosque at the very spot where the Babri Masjid stood before its demolition on December 6. Instead, he is at pains to explain that he has been falsely projected by the BJP as someone who has greater sympathy for the minorities than for the Hindus, who is dividing the Hindus into 'backward' and 'forward' camps.

Is he on the defensive? Or the contrary. Mulayam Singh is clearly the most active politician in the non-BJP parties. Congress leaders like former chief minister N.D. Tiwari, State Unit Chief Mahavir Prasad and a host of central

ministers like Balaram Singh Yadav have been delaying plans to hold discourses with the people. (Certain unforeseen events like the death of Tiwari's wife, the hailstorm that caused the cancellation of the AICC meet in Amethi and the poor showing at Chandra Swami's *som yagna* in Ayodhya also came in the way.)

The Janata Dal, which initially decided to lie low in view of the "euphoria generated by the December 6 incident", to quote its leader, Reoti Raman Singh, suffered another setback when V.P. Singh fell ill. This happened at a time when the Dal was gearing up to make a splash in UP, a politically important state. By mid-June, when Singh was in a position to tour UP with the Bihar Chief Minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav, Mulayam Singh had already stolen the march.

Today V.P. Singh, who had repeatedly made overtures towards Mulayam Singh, seeking an alliance to overthrow the BJP, has now gone on the offensive. Singh lamented, during his recent tour of eastern UP, that Mulayam Singh had stabbed him the back to topple the National Front Government in 1989.

Mulayam Singh is in a unique position today, being simultaneously wooed by the Congress, different factions of the Janata Dal, the Samajwadi Party and the communists. But he is not bowled over; the former chief minister can hardly ignore the fact that his influence is still restricted to the Yadav community among the backward castes in UP. Even this relatively small constituency has fragmented by Laloo Prasad Yadav who began touring the state after V.P. Singh declared that he was the best bet for the future prime minister.

Mulayam Singh's alliance with Kansi Ram is one of his several attempts to broaden his base. But he is keenly aware of his image- -created by the BJP—that he is anti-Hindu and a harborer of criminals. He is no longer seen in the company of people like Lucknow's Aruna Shankar Shukla, alias Anna,Gonda's Munnan Khan and Bulandsahar's D.P. Yadav, whom he used to earlier describe as persons who have had a "change of heart."

"My effort is to unite the Hindus, the unity of Hindus will also do a world of good for the Muslims," he declared in Allahabad recently. Far from castigating the militant sections among the majority community, Mulayam Singh appealed to Hindus to be more magnanimous towards their Muslim brethren. He is doing a tightrope act, placating Hindus while at the same time ensuring that his Muslim supporters do not get alienated.

The focus of Mulayam Singh's efforts these days is to ensure that sections of the backward castes, like the Lodhs, the Kumbhars, and the Kurmis, do not get drawn by the BJP's propaganda. And the poor attendance at the public meetings of the former BJP chief minister, Kalyan Singh, in recent weeks has come as a shot in his arm.

Mulayam Singh has also begun to woo a section of sadhus, particularly those belonging to the backward castes and those who are closer to the Sufi tradition. He also tried to flaunt his influence among the saffron order by getting eight of them to criticize the BJP at a press conference in Lucknow. These days he seeks the blessings of holy men in his public meetings for the success of the Samajwadi-Bahujan Samaj alliance.

Mulayam Singh has publicly supported the PM against Harshad Mehta's charges, saying that such allegations were "part of a greater conspiracy involving the BJP" On the other hand, his ally, Kansi Ram, publicly supports the HRD Minister, Arjun Singh, in his fight against the BJP.

Odd? Mulayam Singh and Kansi Ram are hardly worried about such incongruities. They obviously hope to be in a position to pick up the pieces if the Congress breaks up under the Mehta onslaught.

But Mulayam Singh is not yet ready to strike alliances either with the Janata Dal or the Congress. He clearly hopes to extend his influence beyond the Yadav community, draw a substantial section of Muslims who have become averse to the Congress, and create a situation in which the non-BJP parties would be left with no option but to project him as the next chief minister. However, the time available for the maneuver is short, as the elections to the UP assembly are in November.

* Mulayam Yadav Interviewed on 'Secular Opposition Unity'

93LA0189C Madras FRONTLINE in English 27 Aug 93 p 35

[Mulayam Singh Yadav interviewed by Venjitish Ramachandran: "Clearly Gunning for BJP"; italicized and boldface words as publsihed]

[Excerpts] What is his game? Samajwadi Party [SP] leader Mulayam Singh Yadav's recent actions have evoked this question from all parts of Uttar Pradesh. On the one hand he has consistently campaigned against the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], accusing it of upper caste-oriented Hindu communalism. Simultaneously, he has been trying to woo, with significant success, sections of the upper castes. At another level, he has charged the Congress(I) with helping communal forces and branded it the fountainhead of corruption. But he also supported the Congress(I)-sponsored Som Yagna and bailed out the Central Government on the no-confidence motion.

This act of "saving the Government" has considerably dampened the centrist Opposition unity moves which, till three weeks ago, seemed to be a promising prospect. **Venkitish Ramakrishnan** met him to determine the logic of his controversial actions. Excerpts from the interview:

Your stand on the no-confidence motion has become very controversial. The pattern of voting in the Lok Sabha on the motion shows it was the SP-BSP [Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party] combine's decision to abstain that saved the Government. What was the rationale behind this stand?

I have been forced to answer this question many times in the last 10 days. I have made my position very clear. I did not want to associate with any move that would have made me come together with the BJP.

But it was the CPI(M) [Communist Party of India (Marxist)] that sponsored the motion. Besides, the motion clearly mentioned the demolition of the Babri Masjid and held the Government responsible for not protecting the structure.

Was it not the BJP which demolished the Masjid? And when they supported the motion that mentioned this, were they not seeking some gain from it? In their fascist scheme of things, support to the motion was only a tool. I am very clear about my perceptions on the BJP. Even if it was the CPI(M) that sponsored the motion, my party and the BSP did not want to do anything that would have strengthened the BJP.

How would the defeat of the Government strengthen the BJP?

Had the Government fallen, the BJP would have been invited to form the government. They would have come up with some trick or the other. The consequences of that would have been terrible for the nation.

You have been accusing the Congress(I) and the Central Government of being the fountainheads of corruption. Yet you did not take a clear stand when the Government was being questioned on this...

Look, let me make this clear. The Congress(I) is corrupt. It is a devil. But the BJP is not only corrupt, it is also fascist. It is a monster. It is not my business to help the monster replace the devil.

Whatever your arguments, the present stance has evoked resentment even among your ardent supporters. Many from your Muslim support base have pointed out that you should have supported the motion that referred to the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

Those who are saying that I should have helped the BJP do not represent the majority among the Muslims. The majority supports my stand.

Your stand has invited suggestions that you are trying to strike an adjustment with the Congress(I) to garner a portion of the upper caste Hindu votes.

I am not planning to have an alliance or understanding with the Congress(I). As for upper caste votes, I have that already.

Another fallout of your stand has been the virtual collapse of centrist Opposition unity moves...

I have not approached anybody for unity. If they want to, let them come to me. I have made my position clear. The Samajwadi Party will not merge with any party. We can think about seat adjustments.

V.P. Singh has announced that you will be made Chief Minister if you fight the election jointly...

That was one week ago. Now he has started a mud-slinging campaign against me. He has identified the SP-BSP combine as his number one enemy, while we are fighting the BJP.

Your approach seems to be one that virtually rules out secular Opposition unity...

Secular unity has been achieved with the formation of the SP-BSP combine.

What about the Left parties? Will you be having an alliance with them?

I have stood with them consistently for the last 5-6 years. Many times I have heeded their advice. But they continue to share a platform with the V.P. Singhs and Ram Vilas Paswans who are abusing me. If they continue like this I will have to rethink. I am under pressure from my rank and file.

During the 1991 elections you took a similar stand shutting out alliance and seat adjustment with other secular Opposition parties, and that helped the BJP come to power with less than 35 percent of the votes. Will not your stand lead to the same situation this time?

The BJP does not have the strength that it had in 1991. At that time the communal frenzy it created was much more than now. Moreover, its rule from 1991 to 1993 exposed the fact that the party does not have the capacity to provide a good government. You will see the SP-BSP combine coming up victors with at least 265 of the 425 seats in the next elections.

* Paper Interviews Samajwadi Party Leader Yadav

93AS1174A Madras THE HINDU in English 1 Sep 93 p 8

[Excerpts] With the elections to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly on the anvil, the focus is now on the former Chief Minister of the State and the prime enemy of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav. He had promptly launched a concerted campaign against the "Sangh Parivar" after the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6. He is definitely a force to reckon with in the State as far as the BJP is concerned.

While this is not in doubt, whether the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party [SP-BSP] combine alone will stall the BJP from staging a comeback continues to be a serious question. Political perception is that the combine by itself will not defeat the BJP and that it needs to take along the Janata Dal with it to accomplish this.

Mr Yadav, however, is certain that this is not the case. In an interview with **V. Krishna Ananth**, the Samajwadi Party leader not only precludes such an alliance with the Dal, but even goes to the extent of charging that Mr V.P. Singh and his party are colluding with the BJP to defeat the SP-BSP combine.

Excerpts from the interview:

Question: How do you perceive the elections to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly that are expected to be held in the coming months? Essentially, do you find any differences in the political climate between the Assembly elections in 1991, when the BJP came to power and the situation prevailing in the State now?

Answer: There is a lot of difference between then and now. The most important factor in 1991 that went against the Samajwadi Party was that the party organization was very weak. In addition to this, polling was cancelled in my

constituency and this had a lot of impact on the results. Thirdly, our stand on the Ayodhya dispute could not be conveyed to the people at large, and more importantly, our position on this central issue was widely misinterpreted.

Now the Samajwadi Party is well entrenched with local units established in every village of Uttar Pradesh. Similarly, our stand on the Ayodhya dispute now stands vindicated, thanks to the developments of December 6 and the organizational strength of our party. Again, it has clearly emerged now that it was the postponing of elections in Jaswantnagar (Mr Mulayam's constituency) was the single largest factor that helped the BJP emerge as the ruling party in the State.

What about the BJP now? Do you think that its influence has increased after the demolition of Babri Masjid?

No. Any issue has its appeal only once. The BJP raised the Mandir-Masjid issue once and gained substantially from it. This does not mean that they can continue with it for long and neither can the issue yield political gains nor will the issue itself carry weight again. Take the case of similar slogans taken up by the Congress (I) such as *'gharibhi hatao'* (remove poverty) in 1971. The slogan carried conviction with the people only once. People saw the real face of this slogan in the Emergency and refused to be taken for a ride again. The point is that the Ayodhya dispute is now redundant and that the people are not going to be carried away by the BJP again.

Do you mean to say that the events of December 6 has not helped the BJP?

The BJP is irrelevant. It will be a great thing to them if they can retain their prestige. The BJP should prepare itself for the worst humiliation in the ensuing elections. What was the BJP in Uttar Pradesh in the recent past? Once they whipped up communal sentiment in such a large scale and gained and their considerable presence in the Lok Sabha also gave them some amount of credibility. The people were also unhappy with us and tried a new party. The situation is different now.

So what will be the major issues in the coming elections?

It will stress on reducing the country's dependence on foreign capital with special focus on Uttar Pradesh's developmental needs. Amity between various religious communities, which was destroyed by the BJP. Our party manifesto will be prepared in a fortnight and apart from these issues it will also have removal of English and introduction of Indian languages in school curriculum. Humiliation has been inflicted on teachers and students by the Kalyan Singh Government through the Anti-copying Act. This will be repealed. It will promise 70 percent of the State budget to be allocated to the agricultural sector to help the farmers.

Social justice, which in our definition is much beyond the Mandal Commission, will find a prominent place in our election campaign. Mandal Commission is only a part of social justice. We will categorically oppose the 'creamy layer' concept and demand implementation of the reservation formula for backward classes without any qualification.

The Janata Dal too is placing the same demand and this indeed is the central plank of Mr V.P. Singh's campaign now in Uttar Pradesh...

Janata Dal is campaigning for its implementation in a State where it was already implemented by me when I was the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister. Why does Mr V.P. Singh refuse to go to Orissa where Mr Biju Patnaik of his own party has categorically refused to implement the reservation formula. Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav has not implemented the recommendations completely. Mr V.P. Singh's campaign is only a show. He is responsible for having removed the essence from the Mandal Commission report by leaving it free to the State Governments to implement or not to accept the reservation formula for backwards in the State Government jobs. Similarly, why did he leave it to the States to prepare and decide on the list of backward communities who will benefit.

No, but Mr V.P. Singh's demand is that the Central Government should implement the reservation formula...

Still why does he campaign here in Uttar Pradesh. It would serve him better to remain in Delhi and fight for it. He can raise it in Parliament, in the Central Hall, stall the proceedings of Parliament on this demand. This will be a better means to create public opinion. He is moving about in Uttar Pradesh with a single point program to oppose me. His intention is to damage the prospects of Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh more than the implementation of Mandal Commission's recommendations.

By all these, the Janata Dal is doing nothing but helping the BJP. In fact there is no doubt that the Janata Dal is hand in glove with the BJP against me and my party. Janata Dal's only aim now is to ensure that Samajwadi Party does not form Government in Uttar Pradesh. The entire exercise began ever since our party entered into an agreement with the Bahujan Samaj Party.

So do you mean to say that there is no possibility of an understanding between your party and the Janata Dal at all?

From our side, we are open to understanding. But we will not take the initiative. If the Janata Dal comes out with some formal proposal we will consider them. All that has come till now is in the press. Unity proposals do not come through the media.

How do you say that you can consider formal proposals when by your own contention, the difference on the Mandal issue is irreconcilable?

The difference is only that they are not serious. If they admit this and are willing to correct themselves, then we can talk. But they should be prepared to correct themselves. Let them admit that they joined hands with the BJP in the Lok Sabha on the no- confidence and the stalling of the Bill to delink religion from politics. Mr V.P. Singh is capable of joining hands with the BJP for the sake of power.

Do you mean to say that the Janata Dal should shed Mr V.P. Singh away and then the party can reform itself?

This is for them to decide. What is important is the Congress mentality of Mr V.P. Singh. Strangely, he charges me of supporting the Congress. Can there be anyone who is more anti-Congress than our party. We even gave up power in 1991, for the simple reason that we were not willing to ask for support from Rajiv Gandhi. Even for a limited period, my Government took Congress support on the basis of certain political program. On the other hand, Mr V.P. Singh came up as a leader and made his political career from the Congress. He betrayed the Congress only for power.

So what you say is that Mr V.P. Singh still represents the Congress culture to which you are opposed to.

Without a doubt. A Congressman will never change. Even now, if it appears to him that he can become the Prime Minister by joining the Congress(I), he will go to the Congress. There are many Congressmen who are pursuing this project to replace Mr Narasimha Rao with an alternate leader.

* Mulayam Singh Said to Understand How to Combat BJP

94AS0047K Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 12 Sep 93 p 4

[Article Sankarshan Thakur]

[Text] Lucknow, Sept. 11—Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav was visibly pleased. So many had decided to join him all at once that he was having to heckle his own gunmen into making room for the new entrants. "Hatiye, jagah dijiye, jagah dijive—Move and give way," he protested. More and more leaders and followers poured into the little hall in Lohia Sadan.

There was a former MP and state minister from Mr Ajit Singh's party, a vice-president of the Uttar Pradesh Janata Dal, even a district president of the BJP. "This is not an ordinary occasion," Mr Mulayam Singh said over the din. "This shows which way the wind is blowing. More will come, just wait and see."

Having read out their little panegyrics one after the other, the newcomers stood like courtiers behind Mr Mulayam Singh and then posed for pictures with the leader in the centre, dimunitive but cross-legged and nawab-like. Outside, clusters of supporters stood in the drizzle, some with guns, some with roses, shouting "Mulayam Singh zindabad."

Someone in the hall asked mockingly when Mr V.P. Singh was joining him. Mr Mulayam Singh eased off his glasses and said, "This question you ask him, he should be more interested in unity. As you can see, people who want to join me are joining me." Mr Mulayam Singh scarcely misses the opportunity to rub the point that if there is an unchallenged frontrunner among non-BJP parties in Uttar Pradesh, it is he.

If the coming elections were to be a contest based on past records and equations, Mr Mulayam Singh's case would seem lost enough. He had a mere 340 members in the dissolved Assembly and is reputed to have little or no influence over large parts of the eastern, western and hilly regions of the state. But then Mr Mulayam Singh is not depending on past records and equations; his entire strategy is to break and distort them.

The first step towards that direction was the alliance with Mr Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Samaj Party. Then came a series of practical conventions for the non-Yadavs among the backwards—Pasis, Lodhes, Nishads, Binds, Kashyaps. The latest tactic to broadbase his appeal is probably his most audacious: Mr Mulayam Singh is hoping to eat into the BJP's urban constituency by usurping its slogan for the abolition of sales tax. In a few days from now, he will chair a state-level convention of traders in which more concessions to the essentially BJP-centric community will flow.

Reaching out: If Mr Mulayam Singh, with just a handful of legislators behind him, is beginning to look more and more like the tail which wags the dog, it is not merely because his hold over the backward-Muslim constituency in the state is the firmest. It is also because he is not limiting himself there; he is reaching out to more sections. Quite deliberately, he seems to have toned down its belligerence on the Mandal question and his shrill pro-minorityism. "Mulayam Singh seems to have realised," says a senior bureaucrat, "that the backward-Muslim constituency will give him leadership of a section, but it will not be enough to get where he wants."

Mr Mulayam Singh is also aware that the absence of a pact with the Dal can hurt his fortunes. But he believes he can hurt them more than they can hurt him. Any agreement, therefore, will only be on his terms, which not only means that his claims to chief ministership are unchallenged but also that he has more than just the lion's share in the distribution of tickets. Mr Mulayam Singh could not care less if the Dal finds that unacceptable. "What is the need for any pact with the Dal when we are breaking new grounds on our own?" asks Mr Rajni Kant Verma, one of Mr Mulayam Singh's backroom planners. "They will come to us, we don't need to go to them."

One of the reasons why Mr Mulayam Singh can afford to be so contemptuous of the Dal at the moment is the fact that he may be playing for a hung Assembly in which his will be the largest non-BJP group. In case of such a scenario, he foresees other parties rallying around him: there would be no other option of stopping the BJP from forming the government.

Mr Mulayam Singh also realises that in a situation where there is no clear victor, the mere projection of winnability can be an asset. And that he is doing better than any other non-BJP party at the moment, not only setting a blistering campaign pace statewide but also seizing the initiative on most issues from Mandal to the border pact with China.

Knowing that the BJP would grumble about India "bartering away" its interests to China, Mr Mulayam Singh took

the lead in criticising the Narasimha Rao-Li Peng agreement. "This is going to hurt our national interests," he said, at least ensuring the BJP did not derive any additional benefit on the issue.

* Mulayam Singh Seen Strong in Uttar Pradesh

94AS0044E Madras FRONTLINE in English
24 Sep 93 p 34

[Article by S.K. Pande: "The Muyalam Factor: Uncertainties in Uttar Pradesh"]

[Text] As things start hotting up for the Assembly elections in four Hindi-speaking States and the Union Territories of Delhi, it is increasingly becoming clear that the central focus will be on Uttar Pradesh. Here is a State which had its Bharatiya Janata Party Government for the first time, and yet, unlike in others, the main contest is not between the Congress(I) and the BJP. Here it would be a variety of formulations, and formulations within formulations.

As of now, though the Congress(I) is on the downswing, the BJP is not on the upswing either. For a while, it looked like a close combat between the two parties. Now, especially after the announcement on the Mandal recommendations, the Janata Dal(B) is back in the reckoning, and with the return of the Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP) and the Ajit Singh group to the Janata Dal family, the atmosphere has been further electrified. The position on the ground would be broadly: the BJP in the lead; the Samajwadi Party of Mulayam Singh Yadav and his ally, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) of Kanshi Ram, somewhat behind; and the Janata Del parivar almost catching up.

It was Mulayam Singh Yadav's day in Lucknow on September 24. A virtual sea of humanity covered the Begum Hazrat Mahal Park. Yet though it was one of the biggest rallies the State capital has had, it was not without its grey patches. The star of the show was Mulayam Singh Yadav himself, and he seemed to enjoy every bit of it. Encouraged by the crowd response, the rally saw some of the speakers, specially close lieutenants of Mulayam Singh, attack V.P. Singh. And yet, at the meeting, it was clear that no matter how much Mulayam Singh depended on Kanshi Ram, the latter did not attract too much attention.

It was equally clear that while the crowds gave a rousing reception to Mulayam Singh, not all responded in the same vein to the "magical formula" of the BSP and Mulayam Singh together forming a government. It is true that the BSP's percentage of votes had improved considerably in the last elections, but the situation now seems to be slightly different—a slump in the BSP's popularity is visible, as is an upswing in Mulayam Singh's popularity.

The Congress, badly mauled in 1991, is fighting a last-ditch battle. The response to N.D. Tiwari's Vikas Yatra goes to show that the party is still capable of a few surprises.

In an eleventh-hour attack on the BJP, the Congress(I) is bringing out a series of leaflets exposing the Kalyan Singh Government's misdeeds. It seems to be readying for a battle in which there may be some last-minute adjustments with others, for it has to prove that it still exists in U.P.

Mulayam Singh seems to be working on his own stratagem—posing to be Number One, preparing to be Number Two and hoping for a hung Assembly in which event the secular Opposition, including the Janata Dal family and the Congress(I), would have no option but to support him. Bihar Chief Minister Lallu Prasad Yadav is to meet Mulayam Singh. The Left is preparing for another round of talks with him and is in constant touch with the other Janata Dal groups. The CPI and the CPI(M) units of U.P. have held their own conclaves and also joint meetings in New Delhi, and agreed on seat adjustments. Though a final break with Mulayam Singh may not come about even if all their attempts fail, the Left parties would not like to break the alliance with the National Front. It is, indeed, tight-rope-walking.

The theory that the credit for the Mandal recommendations will go to the Congress(I) may not hold true if the crowds at some of V.P. Singh's meetings are an indicator. Significantly, the hostility V.P. Singh faced in the previous round is not there. A slight swing in western U.P. from the BJP to the Ajit Singh group is also a straw in the wind. With Mulayam Singh going strong, this could be one of the closest contests U.P. has ever had.

* Mulayam Singh Interviewed on Prospects

94AS0044D Madras FRONTLINE in English
24 Sep 93 p 119

[Interview with Mulayam Singh Yadav by S.K. Pande]

[Text] Black Cat commandos outside his New Delhi North Avenue residence, a personal security guard at the door and a throng of visitors in the sitting room. Samajwadi Party supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav, sitting in a room inside, looked cool and confident as he etched out his future course of action, dwelt on his talks with the Left parties, and made his usual jibs at Janata Dal leader V.P. Singh. Talking to S.K. Pande, Mulayam Singh said his party and ally Bahujan Samaj Party would defeat the BJP and comfortably win the forthcoming Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections. He was hopeful of a reasonable understanding with the Left, but ruled out merger with any party. Excerpts:

Pande: Now that your national executive has met and you have held talks with some Left parties, what will be your future course of action?

Mulayam Singh: Let me speak about the Samajwadi Party first. On September 24, you will see one of the biggest rallies witnessed in Lucknow. We will tell the people of the price spiral, the unending corruption, the grip of brown sahibs with their "English language culture," the draconian anti-copying ordinance imposed by the erstwhile BJP Government and continued by the present Governor's administration in U.P., and the misery of the common man. It will be a rally for social justice for all and not the type of social justice which Mr. V.P. Singh talks of one day, forgets the next day and brings back to life another day.

You could well see a rally that will show you the wide spectrum of support the Samajwadi Party has.

Pande: What was the outcome of your talks with the Left?

Mulayam Singh: It will not be proper for me to discuss the details, but this much I can say: I am also for unity of the secular forces to defeat the BJP, but I am not in agreement with them (the Left parties) on their understanding of Mr. V.P. Singh. It is my firm view that Mr. V.P. Singh represents the Congress culture and, though out of the Congress, he is still part of that culture. As for the Left, I hold them in the highest esteem. I expect full cooperation from them. As for the Janata Dal (A), (B), or (C), I categorically rule out a merger with any. As of now, I even reject adjustments.

Pande: What is your assessment of the Left's standing in general and in U.P. in particular?

Mulayam Singh: I consider myself very close to them and have been in touch with leaders like Mr. Harkishen Singh Surjeet, Mr. Jyoti Basu and recently with Indrajit Gupta. In fact, I am all for an understanding with them.

Pande: What is your problem with V.P. Singh?

Mulayam Singh: Let us put it more generally. The problem with the Janata Dal is that they are a divided house. Their politics is not clear. They even colluded with the BJP when it suited them; they do not support the Angreji hatao (remove English) language policy. They do not fight for the removal of a black ordinance imposed in the name of checking copying. These are just some points. Our opposition is on principles.

Pande: If you are opposed to both the Congress(I) and the BJP, why did you support the no-confidence motion against the Congress?

Mulayam Singh: Let me put it this way: both are evil, both are corrupt. I would add that the BJP is fascist; the Congress has the potential to turn fascist, but is now a weaker force. As far as alignments are concerned, both are to be kept away.

Pande: Would you say that the ground reality has changed since 1991? Are you not somewhat over-confident?

Mulayam Singh: There is a fundamental difference. There was a wave against us and we had no organisation. Now we have a proper organisation and the BJP rule, I would call it misrule, has been witnessed by the people. On December 6, the structure that I protected was demolished by the BJP-RSS combine. The BJP earlier had the traders on their side. They are with us now. The youth are also veering towards the secular forces...

Pande: But are you sure you are not following a policy which you would regret later, if you miss coming to office by a whisker and the BJP manages to come to power?

Mulayam Singh: As of now, I do not see that possibility and many are underestimating the BSP factor, which is in our favour.

Pande: But there is a V.P. Singh factor too, just as there is a Mulayam Singh factor.

Mulayam Singh: Let us leave out individuals. I see the people's factor, the ground factor.

Pande: What is your overview of the Bill to delink religion from politics?

Mulayam Singh: I do not agree with the way the Government brought a Bill with various lacunae and dangerous clauses. I agree with the objective. I say religion in election is poison. Practised at home and seen in totality, religion can be (like) harmonious music. I am not against religion, but against mixing religion with politics.

Pande: How would you sum up your vision and understanding of your party?

Mulayam Singh: We are committed to completing the unfinished task as envisaged by Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan and Acharya Narendra Dev. We are emerging with a Leftist philosophy—see the lakhs who courted arrest with us from August 9 to 14.

Pande: You called the Janata Dal's secularism fake.

Mulayam Singh: Some of them in the Janata Dal act as agents of the BJP and nourish Manu-Smriti...

* Mulayam Singh Sees Uttar Pradesh Key to Political Future

94AS0009D New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 28 Sep 93 pp 1, 10

[Article by Ram Bahadur Rai: "UP Election Will Determine Nation's Future—Mulayam Singh"]

[Text] New Delhi, 27 September—Mulayam Singh, president of the Samajwadi Party, believes that the U.P. election will define our nation's politics all over again. In this context, he does not consider this election to be for one state, but for the whole nation. He is trying to send messages to the left-wing parties based on this understanding. He has a slight hope that the left-wing parties will understand the facts and will be willing to collaborate with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)-Samajwadi (SP) Party coalition. He is trying once again.

Mulayam Singh does not mention the Janata Dal and other parties in his long talks. It is rather difficult to make him talk about these parties. He does not do that because of his negative attitude toward them. He is still very positive. He just has stopped thinking about the Janata Dal and its affiliates. While responding to a question about it, he says that three efforts to unite these leaders have failed. He reminded us of the 1967, 1977, and 1989 experiences and said that Samajwadi Party will not waste its time trying to foster similar unity again. He said that he was working to unite the people and his party workers. Mulayam Singh said that he was trying for a new kind of polarization. He feels that a government formed after such a polarization will be stable. He considers the BSP-SP coalition to be such a polarization.

The left-wing leaders are trying to bring Mulayam Singh under the Janata Dal leadership umbrella by pointing to him the danger of political instability. Harikishan Singh Surjit and Inderjit Gupta have talked to him about it at length several times. He just is determined not to have any relationship with the Janata Dal group. He is willing to collaborate over some seats with left-wing parties if they are interested. His answers to related questions are the same as he has repeated earlier. He objects to the approach itself. He does not trust the Janata Dal leaders about their honesty for unity because of the approach the Janata Dal has taken. Mulayam Singh does not point to a specific leader, and if he did mention any leader's name, he does not want it to be printed here. The old accusation is that the Janata Dal leaders were talking about unity with him through newspapers. This was their political dishonesty that Mulayam Singh wanted to bring to light. Chanderjit Yadav had once said to this reporter that S.R. Bommai, the Janata Dal president, had gone to Lucknow with a solid proposal. When reminded about it, he asked what proposal was that?

Mulayam Singh compares [the parties]. He gives examples of the Janata Dal and the BSP and explains which party really wants unity. He said that after the 6 December incident, he talked regularly for one week with the BSP leader Kanshi Ram in Delhi. It can be said that Mulayam Singh and Kanshi Ram talked for about 80 hours. The BSP and SP coalition resulted from these talks. Mulayam Singh said that he has been trying for this for two years. After telling us about this in details, he asked if any newspaper reporter ever got wind of it. This way he gave an answer to the Janata Dal. He continued in the same vein and said that the world knew of it when he told the press on 13-14 December 1992. He added that he had talked with Rao Virendra Singh similarly. The Janata Dal people first tell the press and then hold talks.

Mulayam Singh is sharply attacking all the parties except for the Congress (I) and the BJP. He will do this in his election rallies also. His attacks will continue to get sharper and more aggressive. He says about the elections that the BSP-SP coalition is competing with the BJP, but the non-BJP parties are acting as if they are running for election against his party. He proves his point by referring to the newspaper statements issued by these parties.

Mulayam Singh is following a different logic. The Janata Dal wants to collaborate on seats over the same basis as used in the earlier elections. Mulayam Singh asks how can the BJP lose if we continue using the old system? His analysis indicates that the present situation has changed. This is his major reasoning. The BSP-SP coalition was formed on this very basis. This coalition believes that there will be a non-BJP and non-Congress polarization in Uttar Pradesh. Mulayam Singh gives the example of defection of a huge number of leaders and workers to Samajwadi Party from Janata Dal after the successful rally in Lucknow to support this assumption. He does not say this all but one can infer from his comments that the election in Uttar Pradesh is between two groups—BJP against the BSP-SP coalition. Only these two groups have candidates for the position of chief minister. Not only in Uttar Pradesh, but in every state, this is one of the bases for polarization.

The world may not trust Kanshi Ram; Mulayam Singh does. He calls Kanshi Ram's speeches promises to the people and says that he had clarified everything in Lucknow on 24 September. He appeared to be very happy about this. Mulayam Singh's face begins to radiate when this episode is brought up. He dismisses summarily a possible secret deal with the Congress (I). He can also give proofs if someone asks for them. He calls the rallies of BSP-SP the gatherings of those who sweat, however, calls the proposed October rally of the Congress (I) a molasses rally.

* Mulayam Singh Position Seen Strong

94AS0041C Varanasi AJ in Hindi 29 Sep 93 p 12

[Article: "Mulayam Singh's Strength"]

[Text] The unity of Janata Dal family and Mulayam Singh's decision not to join it and his announcement about not forming any election alliance have created an uneasy situation for the anti-BJP forces.

Mulayam Singh has not only refused to join the Janata family, he is also opposed to forming an election alliance. He wants to form some agreement with left-wing parties over some seats. He says that he will consider with Kanshi Ram only some concrete proposal from Janata Dal, and will not offer any proposal for an understanding himself. This will definitely divide the anti-BJP votes in Uttar Pradesh. The united Janata Dal and the Samajwadi Party have equal support from social angle. Both are hoping for widespread support from low caste people, backward groups, and the Muslims.

The fact is that it is Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi party which was directly effected by the unity of the Janata Dal family. It had emerged as the most powerful party when the Janata Dal was divided. He had the full hope of getting votes from backward castes, Dalits, and the Muslims. He was the sole challenger to defeat the BJP, however, the situation appears to have changed now. V.P. Singh and the Janata Dal got a boost when the central government decided to implement Mandal recommendations. Janata Dal's political influence will increase in the jat-majority areas of western Uttar Pradesh with the arrival of Ajit Singh. The Muslim leaders also have urged V.P. and Mulayam Singh to join forces. The Muslim leaders are leaning more toward V.P. Singh than Mulayam Singh. V.P. Singh had responded positively to the letter that Imam Abdullah Bukhari of Jama Masjid had written to both leaders, however, Mulayam Singh had requested that he reply after 24 September because Samajwadi Party was holding a rally in Lucknow on 24 September.

Mulayam Singh's partner Kanshi Ram's leaning toward the Congress (I) has also caused problem for him. Mulayam Singh opposed to any kind of collaboration with the Congress (I) Party. The Congress (I) is also trying to breakup the Samajwadi-Bahujan Samaj Party coalition. The Congress Working Committee has made an informal decision to keep the path to a possible election agreement

with either of these parties in Uttar Pradesh, however, the state Congress (I) is strongly opposed to it.

Even though Mulayam Singh supports forming some agreement with left-wing parties only, the mood of the left-wing parties has changed since the rise of the Janata Dal. In spite of great efforts by Harikishan Singh Surjit, leader of the CPI (M), and Inderjit Gupta, leader of the CPI (I) for an agreement, Mulayam Singh did not take any positive step. The left-wing parties believe that sooner or later Mulayam Singh will join the anti-BJP front.

The main reason for Mulayam Singh's attitude is his increasing popular support and the rising number of people joining the Samajwadi Party from other groups. However, its effect on election can only be assumed. Since the Janata Dal family and Samajwadi-Bahujan Samaj party coalition are pitted against each in the election, there is the possibility of very different kind of results.

Mr. Raghu Thakur, the Samajwadi Party general secretary, says that V.P. Singh and the Janata Dal family should leave Uttar Pradesh for Samajwadi-Bahujan Samaj party coalition. He argues that the polarization against communal forces can occur only in favor of Samajwadi Party.

• Communists Said Drifting Towards Mulayam Singh in UP

94AS0047G Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 30 Sep 93 p 2

[Text] New Delhi, Sept. 29—The Uttar Pradesh state committees of the CPI and CPI(M) are all for supporting the Samajwadi Party leader, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, even though their central leaderships are pushing through an alliance with Mr V.P. Singh.

Sources feel this dichotomy would split the support base of the Left parties in the state. It said, "The CPI(M) leadership is bulldozing the state committee into accepting the line." But, the CPI central leadership is finding it difficult to follow suit as there is greater democratic functioning in the party.

The CPI general secretary, Mr Indrajit Gupta, who was in Lucknow yesterday, failed to persuade state party comrades to fall in line with the central leadership's decision. The CPI(M) general secretary, Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet, will go to Lucknow tomorrow to overcome the pockets of resistance in the state committee to the central leadership's preference for the Janata Dal leader.

A top CPI leader admitted that Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav commanded larger support base than Mr V.P. Singh in Uttar Pradesh. However, the central leadership is inclined to support the Dal leader because of all-India compulsions. Moreover, the Left leadership has found Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav extremely stubborn in his hostility toward Mr V.P. Singh.

After chasing the mirage of unity between the two warring leaders for over six months, the Left leaders are finally reconciled to making a choice. The CPI leader, Mr A.B. Bardhan, said, "Not only are we disillusioned, we are also resentful of Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav's attitude."

The sources said Mr Gupta met Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav in Lucknow yesterday for a last try. But the meeting was not very cordial as the latter seemed overconfident of taking on the BJP with help from the BSP leader, Mr Kansi Ram.

The Samajwadi Party leader reportedly told the CPI general secretary that if he formed a government with the "unreliable" Janata Dal groups, it would not last even six months. Repeating a series of allegations against Mr V.P. Singh, the Samajwadi Party leader boasted of wide support from traders in the state, sources added.

Mr Gupta's meeting with Mr V.P. Singh in Lucknow, on the other hand, went off very well. According to a Left leader, Mr Singh had assured the CPI leader that his party "will not repeat the earlier mistake of treating the Left shabbily."

The Dal leaders in Uttar Pradesh have been instructed to identify the Left seats. The CPI(M) and the CPI have already submitted a list of 79 seats they would like to contest in the state. The CPI has claimed 51 seats and the CPI(M) 28, most of which are concentrated in eastern and central Uttar Pradesh.

During the last elections, the CPI and the CPI(M) had fielded candidates in 20 and 15 seats respectively. While the CPI had won four seats, the CPI(M) managed only one.

The CPI and CPI(M) general secretaries met today to review the situation. Talks are likely to be held with the united Janata Dal soon to work out seat adjustments.

• Mulayam Singh Praised for Standing Up To Imam's Fatwehs

94AS0062A Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 10 Oct 93 p 8

[Article by M.J. Akbar: "Bully for Him"]

[Text] His doting parents obviously had visions of another temperament when they named their son "Mulayam": of a soft and sweet child who would grow up into a paradigm of gentleness when he became a man's age. Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav is a case of complete mismatch between name and character. As more and more of our professional cynics who indulge in politics as a wealth-and-status sport are beginning to realise, there is nothing soft about Mr Yadav.

There are many kinds of politics just as there are many kinds of politicians, and some seasons are better suited to one category rather than the other. Periods of uncertainty and confusion, such as we are witnessing for the last five years or so, are extremely fertile for one type: the bully.

The psychograph of the bully should be familiar to us by now. He is the sectional leader, claiming tribal monopoly rights over his ethnic flock. He knows his vote occupies a key place in the arithmetic of any electoral victory. He absolutely revels in the turgid culture of the bargaining table, sulking, delaying and demanding with an almost childish inconsideration of others.

One of the most persistent of such prototypes has been Mr Ajit Singh, heir of his father's harvest, and chief electoral manager of the Jats of western Uttar Pradesh [UP]. The manner in which Mr Ajit Singh fought and squabbled over the tidbits of Janata Dal reunity made a mockery of that effort. The show always had a tired and cliched ring to it; Mr Ajit Singh confirmed that it was a pale farce.

For a week the fate of the great Janata unity show was held by the conflict on whether Mr Ajit Singh should become the great chairman of the parliamentary board or the lesser convenor of the same. But Mr Ajit Singh knew that without his participation Janata unity would be a non-starter. True, he would be able to do very little by himself, but equally, the others would be able to do even less without him. Hence his games.

But Mr Ajit Singh is only a teenager compared to the biggest bully in Indian politics: a large and thoroughly overweight man appointed to lead the prayers in one mosque in New Delhi but self appointed to lead a whole community at election time. This last qualification is important: the shahi imam of the Jama Masjid does not lead India's Muslims all the time; he only preens himself as their leader at election time.

He has no interest in the problems of Indian Muslims during those large swathes of time when life is not controlled by politics. He has no interest in the abject and soul grinding poverty that has become the fate of India's Muslims. He has no interest in the horrible unemployment among Muslim youth. He has no concern at all for the illiteracy that is robbing India's Muslims of their future; and he has absolutely no regard at all for the problems of Muslim women.

But the imam does have enormous regard for Muslim votes. The only time he opens his mouth is during elections, or when issues which will directly impact upon the Muslim mood during elections arise.

Successful bullying, however, demands the presence of both a subject as well as an object, and indeed their implicit cooperation. There has, alas, been no shortage of objects willing to crawl before the biggest [word missing] Indian politics. It was H.N. Bahuguna who, seeking a Muslim orator in the crucial 1977 elections, picked up the imam from the shelf and converted him into a politician.

But at least Bahuguna could claim the imam was only his puppet, though the puppet began to pry loose from his master even when the latter was alive. Through the Eighties the puppet kept on growing in direct proportion to the diminishing size of the politicians who came to kneel before him. They came, and are still turning up, from all parties.

One of the worst, of course, has been Mr V.P. Singh, who not only knelt but prostrated himself. He converted two penny acolytes of the imam into leaders in the hope they would be his permanent agents in the imam's court, and indeed they did fulfil that role and continue to do so.

The Congress leaders were, if anything, worse, since at least Mr V.P. Singh made his overtures publicly. Actually this is not out of character. The Congress has regularly indulged in hypocrisy with the Muslims, playing all sides against the middle on every issue, and not just on the matter of the imam.

The Congress's official secularism has probably been the worst thing to happen to Muslims, since they are fed with that most dangerous of drugs to cure their various ills: the drug called illusion.

The story was being repeated in all its aspects as the run up to the five assembly elections began. The Congress contacts with the imam were clandestine, made by desperate tyros, all attempting to camouflage their contacts like children setting out to steal forbidden fruit. Being children, they were easily exposed.

Mr V.P. Singh, on the other hand, used the imam for high pressure bullying. Mr V.P. Singh's electoral target is but a single state, Uttar Pradesh. It is a perfectly legitimate goal, since it is apparent that the future of India will once again be decided in this sprawling heartland stretching from the virtual source of the Ganga and Jamuna and meandering along with these great rivers till they meet halfway down to the sea.

UP is not merely the most populous state of the country; it is also the central battlefield of the most dangerous issue of modern Indian history: communalism. It was in UP and not in Punjab or Sind that the battle for partition was won and lost. And it is in UP that we will see whether the Hindu communalism of the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP], the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Bajrang Dal will flourish, whether it will be nurtured into something greater and more permanent by electoral victory or controlled and checked by defeat.

There is an interesting anomaly here. Ironically, if there were proportional representation in the Indian electoral system, there would be no question at all of the BJP coming to power. In the last elections, when the BJP recorded an impressive victory, it got only a little more than 30 per cent of the vote. Even the party's permanent managers do not hope to top that performance; they grant that the BJP will probably poll two or three percentage points less.

But if they are still confident of winning "at least 190 sure seats" and getting a decisive chunk of 60 to 70 marginals, it is only because 70 per cent of the non-BJP vote in UP is hopelessly split. The Mulayam Singh Yadav-Kanshi Ram alliance cannot realistically hope to get more than 20 or 22 per cent. The Janata Dal of Mr V.P. Singh, Mr Chandra Shekhar and Mr Ajit Singh can probably manage 15 per cent.

The congress will not cross 10 per cent of the vote, that too largely through the strength of individual candidates. On paper, therefore, it makes sense for the Janata Dal and Mr Yadav to get together: theoretically, a combination of their strengths nudges them ahead of the BJP.

It also solves the Muslim dilemma of whom to support between the two messiahs: Mr V.P. Singh, whose government fell on the Babri issue, or Mr Yadav, who protected

the mosque in 1991. That is the easy arithmetic preferred by Mr V.P. Singh, and he used the imam to try and bully Mr Yadav into agreeing with such a proposition.

The imam, as is his pompous habit, began issuing warnings to Mr Yadav, threatening if the latter did not listen and behave, the former would, by issuing a fatwa, cut off the Muslim support of the latter. This bluster went on for a long while. Naturally, no one worried about the harm these tactics were doing.

Each time the imam indulged in his communal polemics, the only party to react with glee was the BJP. This was, after all, its position: that the secular parties were "secular" only because they surrendered to Muslim communalism. It is no longer a secret that the two men who have contributed substantially to the rise of the BJP has been the imam and his brother in communal arms, Mr Syed Shahabuddin.

Suddenly, it was Mr Yadav who decided to call the imam's bluff. In a well drafted and unambiguous letter, Mr Yadav told the imam a very simple thing: mind your own business. Then he defined what the imam's business was: leading the prayers in one mosque in New Delhi, and no more. What, asked Mr Yadav, did a fatwa have to do in Indian politics?

The imam has still not found an answer. Few balloons have been pricked as successfully as this over-sized one. There has not been a whisper out of the imam's bibulous coterie ever since the letter reached him; perhaps they have still not recovered from the shock. It was, moreover, a costly shock, because the imam and his coterie have profited hugely from their status as the sole selling agency of the Muslim vote.

They are in for even a bigger shock. The rift with Mr Yadav will make no difference to the Muslim vote; it will still go, mostly though not completely, to the latter.

There actually seems to be a sense of relief even among the leaders of the Janata Dal that someone has taken on the imam and exposed him. Talks on some kind of electoral understanding are still going on; perhaps Mr Yadav can be persuaded to leave some seats uncontested in eastern UP. Politics continues, and suddenly the imam is not seen or heard. What a relief.

Mr Yadav has pricked one bubble. He would be doing India a major favour if he now went on to prick a second bubble—that of the BJP.

* Mulayam Singh Said Falling Out of Favor With Muslims

94AS0062H New Delhi ORGANISER in English 10 Oct 93 p 10

[Text] Mulayam Singh Yadav, the former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh [UP], who has painted himself as the saviour of the minorities and backwards and touted by the Left as the main challenger to the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] in the State, is slowly finding himself sliding into irrelevance. From the look of things it seems the BJP need not lose much sleep over the 'Mulayam factor' in UP, as the former Chief Minister, as though overtaken by a death wish, has been committing one political blunder after another which is slowly eroding his support-base.

The Muslims who constitute his main support base are now looking upon him with suspicion following his role during the no-confidence motion tabled against the Narasimha Rao Government recently. For the Muslims, who look upon the Congress-I as their main enemy, Mulayam's role during the no-confidence motion was an act of betrayal. "He says he is our friend and saviour and yet he supports those who have betrayed us,"—is their comment on him.

This political blunder of Mulayam is being encashed by his adversaries who are spreading the message among Muslim voters that "this is not Mulayam's first betrayal." In 1990 too, he had betrayed V.P. Singh, the then Prime Minister, who had sacrificed his gaddi in order to protect the minorities. Mulayam betrayed V.P. Singh and gravitated towards Chandra Shekhar camp to save his Chief Ministership, they argue.

His alleged support to the controversial godman Chandraswami and his now-infamous Yagna that issued a call for the Ram Temple to be built on the site under dispute served the last blow to his pro-Muslim image.

His going hammer and tonge against V.P. Singh who even now retains some support amongst the minority has further weakened his case. That the Janata Dal should play second fiddle to him and acknowledge his supremacy is being portrayed by his opponents as his selfish desire for power. His adversaries point out that V.P. Singh has consistently said that he was willing to acknowledge Mulayam as the sole leader in Uttar Pradesh if only he gets off his high horse and reciprocates the gesture. This propaganda is reportedly resulting in the Muslim masses getting increasingly disillusioned with him.

With the Congress-I down in political camps after December 6, the BJP seems to be in an unassailable position.

* Mulayam Singh Interviewed on Decision to Go It Alone

94AS0044C Madras FRONTLINE in English 22 Oct 93 p 36

[Interview with Mulayam Singh Yadav by S.K. Pande]

[Text] Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav seems to be a man in desperate hurry. After a successful rally in Lucknow and the release of a cassette which, in contrast to the rally, did not attack Janata Dal leader V.P. Singh, he airdashed to Delhi to give guidelines for the party manifesto, and to gauge the atmosphere vis-a-vis other parties. Then, after a meeting in Meerut he returned to Lucknow, to say with confidence that while the others are trying to get together, "We are now finalising our seats." Excerpts from an interview he gave S.K. Pande:

Pande: What was the message of your Lucknow rally?

Mulayam Singh: It shows the massea are with us. It shows that our alliance with the BSP is firm... The rally's composition shows that we are a party covering the length and breadth of Uttar Pradesh.

Pande: There are different versions about your rally...

Mulayam Singh: It was the biggest rally launched by any political party.

Pande: But Kanshi Ram is also reportedly in touch with the Congress?

Mulayam Singh: You heard him at the rally. What he says is often quoted out of context.

Pande: Are the Left initiatives for a dialogue between you and the Janata Dal(B) at an end?

Mulayam Singh: Left leaders meet me and I respect them. However, formulas are only in the air...

Pande: Are the doors for negotiations with the Janata Dal closed?

Mulayam Singh: I made my position clear at the rally.

Pande: There is no question of your joining the Janata Dal or of some electoral understanding...

Mulayam Singh: I will not be joining anybody. Ours (with the BSP) is a firm alliance. The rally proves the strength of the Samajwadi Party, as the emerging party. All others have been tried. It is our chance now.

Pande: It is said the minority vote will get split between the Janata Dal and your party and in some cases the Congress.

Mulayam Singh: The people will not allow that. We are not engaged in minority-wooing politics. The rally showed that from the trader to the youth, from the farmer to the student... to the minority, they were all there.

Pande: Is there any truth in reports of you being somewhat soft on the Congress compared to the BJP, and of keeping some options open?

Mulayam Singh: It is a conspiracy; it is a rumour. The BJP specialises in rumour-mongering, as do some others.

Pande: The Imam of the Jama Masjid wrote to you.

Mulayam Singh: I respect the Imam, but religious leaders should not dabble in politics.

Pande: What is your future programme?

Mulayam Singh: Our election campaign has been launched, seats are being finalised, the manifesto is being finalised. We are way ahead of the others.

Pande: Do you envisage a hung Assembly?

Mulayam Singh: No, no... And even if it is hung, who will be willing for a honeymoon with the BJP?

Pande: But there is something called the index of Opposition unity and division of like-minded votes...

Mulayam Singh: There is something called offensive too. We have launched an offensive, a campaign against the forces of status quo. We hit the ground first. The people understand. A wave situation could well start.

Outlook

• Congress Seen Divided Over Possible Alliance With BSP

9445006 Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 19 Oct 93 p 7

[Article by Sujay Gupta: "BSP to Decide Balance of Power in Chattisgarh"]

[Text] Chattisgarh, Oct. 18—Sandar village has been denied even basic amenities like a health centre and a school building. Says Gokul, an elderly resident, "there is no proper dispensary and the doctor posted here has never shown up. The nurse turns up once or twice a week. If there is a serious illness, we are left to mercy of the gods." The villagers have made endless representations to the district authorities for a school building. But for the past three-and-a-half years no one has taken any notice. Says Nohar Singh, the village Patel, "if this had not been a Harijan village, I am sure the benefits would have reached us."

In Manikchauri village, which has a population of about 500 Harijans, two incidents have completely alienated the backward community. About four months ago, one Kanti Bai was allegedly raped by a person belonging to an upper caste in the village. The villagers, led by the former sarpanch, Mr Iswar Das, not only registered a complaint, but also staged a dharna in the village square demanding the arrest of the culprits. But according to Mr Das, "the police took no action."

Another Adivasi, who was a witness to the rape, was stabbed to death but the culprit has not been identified. Says Mr Das: "I have always been a supporter of the Congress(I) and had good relations with the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party]. But when neither of these parties stood by us, the entire Harijan community was shocked."

He added: "Grandoise schemes and promises of helping the backward communities are meaningless if basic security is denied at the village level."

Other problems in the area, including unemployment, have not been solved. Not finding jobs, many villagers migrate to the nearby towns in search of work.

With basic problems not being solved, the backward castes, which dominate Chattisgarh, are largely a dissatisfied lot.

They are thus faced with a peculiar situation. They neither want to vote for the Congress(I), which they identify with President's rule. They will not support the BJP either, which they feel is "oppressor of the backwards."

The Bahujan Samaj Party [BSP] hopes to capitalize on this dilemma. It is assured of victory in large parts of Bilaspur and Raipur districts. More than 200 Congress(I) workers from the Abhanpur block in Raipur and an equal number from Pamgarh in Bilaspur adjoining Raigarh district have joined the BSP.

According to observers, "swinging the backwards back" will be an uphill task—at least for the Congress(I)—for whom their votes are crucial.

With time running out, it is hardly expected that the Congress(I) can undo its failures. As Mr B.R. Yadav, a veteran leader from Bilaspur and former Minister puts it, "we can only keep our fingers crossed and hope the older generation of backwards votes for us again.

With problems of insecurity, unemployment and lack of basic amenities plaguing the backwards, it remains to be seen whether they will vote for the Congress(I).

Given the widespread discontent among the backward castes in the Chattisgarh belt, the BSP, led by Mr Kanshi Ram will, according to available indications, decide the ultimate balance of power in the area.

With the Congress(I) struggling to bring about an alliance with the BSP in at least the Chattisgarh belt, and Mr Kanshi Ram setting his own terms, including a promise from the Congress(I) to nominate a person from the backward caste as the Chief Minister of the State, the situation here is taking a very interesting turn.

The difference of opinion between the Arjun Singh and the Shukla camps regarding the strategy to deal with the BSP, has also led to serious doubts on whether an alliance will ultimately come about.

According to supporters of the Union Human Resources Development Minister, an alliance with the RSP [Revolutionary Socialist Party], "is the only way out" to protect the backward caste vote bank.

But the Shuklas, it is learnt, are opposed to the idea and see no threat from the BSP. When contacted in Raipur, the Union Water Resources Minister, Mr V.C. Shukla, told THE STATESMAN: "The BSP will not win a single seat in the Assembly polls. An alliance with the party is also unlikely."

However, according to observers, such an attitude might prove detrimental to the Congress(I)'s interests since there is no denying the fact that the BSP has made enough inroads in the Chattisgarh belt.

Though the party has a one-point programme of attacking "Brahmanism in politics" and has made only one promise—representation of the backward castes in the Government—it has garnered sufficient support to pose a threat.

Hectic campaigning by Mr Kanshi Ram and other leaders has also built up support.

However, there is one factor that could go against the party. Till date it has not spelt out in clear terms to what extent it is serious about its alliance with the Congress(I) in the State.

"A non-alliance in U.P. and an alliance in M.P. could send confusing signals," a party source in Bilaspur said.

But one thing is certain—the gains made by the BSP will damage the Congress(I) more than the BJP in the region since the former is counting heavily on the vote bank of the BSP, especially in the Chattisgarh region.

The Congress(I)'s best bet, according to political observers, would be to allow Mr Arjun Singh to work on the alliance with BSP as Mr Kansi Ram is totally averse to talks with the Shuklas.

That for the moment seems to be the best bet. However, whether any form of alliance will take place at all remains to be seen. If the BSP decides to contest alone, the Congress(I) could well have its toughest fight in the Chattisgarh belt.

* Madhya Pradesh Muslims Said to Have 'No Choice' But Congress

94AS0067F Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 21 Oct 93 p 5

[Text] Bhopal, Oct. 20—Despite the Congress(I)'s refusal to apologise for the demolition of the Babri Masjid, Muslims in Madhya Pradesh have no other option but to vote for the party in the coming elections.

The Congress(I) is also leaving no stone unturned in wooing the Muslims in the state who had not voted for the party in the 1990 elections. The Congress(I) has held a series of meetings with the minority community, including a state-level convention in Bhopal. With the Janata Da. and the Samajwadi Party no longer a major force in the state as they are in Uttar Pradesh, Muslims have no other choice but to vote for the Congress(I).

Several Congress(I) leaders, including Mr Arjun Singh, have stressed the need to tender an apology to the community over the Babri Masjid demolition. Though the idea has been rejected by the party, but significantly even the Prime Minister, Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao, in his speech at a public rally held in Bhopal in June had stated that the government regretted the demolition.

The Congress(I) leaders, who believe some sort of an apology must be made, are also divided over the exact wording. While the state party president, Mr Digvijay Singh, has demanded that the party should express its "regrets," the former MP [Member of Parliament] and prominent Muslim leader, Mr Aziz Qureshi, said it should not be anything short of unqualified apology. Mr Qureshi has been spearheading the "apology campaign" and warned that the party may lose its support among Muslim voters if the party remained silent on the issue.

Other Muslim leaders like Mr Aslam Sher Khan, however, have dismissed the need for an apology and said that improving the economic conditions of the community was more important. Mr Khan, an MP from Betul, has held a series of meetings which were largely attended by members of the minority community. The attendance at these meetings showed that the Congress(I) had not lost the support of the Muslim community.

The seats where Muslim voters are in a position to play an important role in the polls are Bhopal, Raisen, Sehore, Khandwa, Ujjain, Mandsaur and Betul, besides some pockets in Raipur and Jabalpur.

The representation of Muslims in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly has been gradually on the decline and in the dissolved House there were only two MLA [Members of Legislative Assembly] from the community, an Independent and a BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] MPA [Member of Provincial Assembly, Abdul Ghani Ansari, who later became a minister.

The Independent MLA from the Bhopal (North) constituency, Mr Arif Aqeel, had polled almost all Muslim votes in the constituency resulting in the Congress(I) candidate losing his deposit. This time Mr Aqeel may file his nomination, but as a BSP [Bahujan Samaj Party] candidate, which is also trying to woo away Muslim voters from the Congress(I).

At a recent meeting of Congress(I) leaders emphasised the need to invoke Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in all speeches and pamphlets, along with those of Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi.

As for the remaining minority communities, tribal Christians in eastern Madhya Pradesh, whose votes are crucial in Raigarh and Sarguja districts, may continue to vote for the Congress(I).

The BJP, however, has launched a vigorous campaign against conversions in the area and has launched a movement to bring the tribals into the Hindu fold. The former BJP, MP, Mr Dilip Singh Judeo, is heading this campaign which may give its own ramifications on the coming elections.

BJP

* Advani Said To Restore Order in BJP's Madhya Pradesh Unit

93AS1000A Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 11 Jul 93 p 4

[Article by Bharat Desai: "Advani Breaks 'Gang of Four,' Placates Madhya Pradesh Rebels: 'High-Handed' General Secretary Recalled to Delhi"]

[Text] Bhopal, July 10: BJP dissidents in Madhya Pradesh are jubilant over the high command's decision to recall the party general secretary in charge of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, Mr Kushabhau Thakre, to Delhi.

Mr Thakre has now been entrusted with supervising the party's organisational affairs. His ouster is seen as a warning to the ruling "gang of four" in the state unit that they would have to mend their ways.

The "gang of four" is a term coined by dissidents to refer to the dominant clique in the state BJP comprising Mr Thakre, the former chief minister, Mr Sunder Lal Patwa, the state party president, Mr Lakhiram Agarwal and the former general secretary, Mr Kailash Sarang. The rift between the dissidents and the "gang of four" widened during the organisational elections held earlier this year.

Mr Thakre, often described as the "Bhisma Pitamaha" of the state BJP, allegedly played a partisan role in the elections and managed to get Mr Lakhiram Agarwal elected as president for a second term despite the high

command's reservations. As a result, the dissidents' candidate, Mr Kailash Joshi, was defeated by a huge margin. He polled 98 votes compared to Mr Agarwal's 224.

The dissidents opposed Mr Agarwal's candidature on the ground that he had not toured the districts and had harmed the party's interests in the Chhattisgarh region by engaging in the tendu trade.

The elections brought the state unit almost on the verge of a vertical split with party workers openly revolting against the Patwa-Thakre combine. Mr Thakre was not even spared by senior leaders like the former chief minister, Mr V. K. Saklecha, the former minister, Mr Narayan, Prasad Gupta, Mr Pyarelal Khandelwal, MP, Ms Uma Bharti and Mr Dilip Singh. Mr Saklecha and Mr Gupta said Mr Thakre should have been impartial befitting his father figure status.

In fact on the eve of elections, Ms Uma Bharti reportedly told the RSS leader, Mr H. V. Seshadri, that the "gang of four" was spending huge sums of money to rig the elections and harassing Mr Joshi and his supporters. Mr Seshadri conveyed Ms Bharti's complaints to the senior BJP leader, Mr L. K. Advani, who then asked Mr Thakre to evolved a consensus. But Mr Thakre could not work towards a consensus and blamed the dissidents for insisting on a showdown.

The dissidents, however, claimed that Mr Thakre did not make any attempt to choose a consensus candidate for the post of state president or ask Mr Joshi to withdraw from the fray. Besides, Mr Agarwal, although a candidate himself, finalised and announced the election schedule without consulting the party's chief election officer, Mr Vishnu Kant Shastri. This left the dissidents without any option.

Mr Joshi said the results would have gone in his favour had Mr Thakre and another senior leader, Ms Vijayraje Scindia, not supported Mr Agarwal.

The dissidents also complained that the former general secretary, Mr Kailash Sarang, a protege of Mr Thakre and the party's treasurer for the last several years, refused to hand over the charge to the incumbent, Mr Sartaj Singh.

That Mr Thakre was on his way out became evident after Mr Advani was elected party president. The dissidents, who complained to him of the irregularities in irregularities state unit, were asked to go to Mr Sunder Singh Bhandari, who was sent to Bhopal before the organisational elections to resolve the dissidence issue. This was a snub to Mr Thakre to whom all issues were referred to earlier.

Mr Bhandari, who is believed to be impartial, has now replaced Mr Thakre as the general secretary in charge of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. As a further sop to the dissidents, Mr Pyarelal Khandelwal, MP, has been made the general secretary in charge of Haryana.

Mr Thakre's supporters were shocked by the latest developments. They said the decision to shift him would cost the party as he was the only leader who had a close rapport with party workers at the district and block levels. He has been controlling party affairs ever since 1954 when he was secretary of the erstwhile Jan Sangh, the loyalists said.

Mr Patwa, who returned from Delhi yesterday morning drove to Mr Sarang's residence and was closetted with him for over an hour. Later, Mr Sarang met Mr Patwa at the latter's residence.

When contacted, the dissident leader, Mr Joshi, reacted cautiously. "Mr Thakre's exit from state politics will be a great loss," he said. Mr Joshi is now finalising his itinerary for touring various regions in the state in his capacity as the head of the BJP's farmers' wing—a post he got after he lost to Mr Agarwal.

* BJP Changing Strategy in Madhya Pradesh

94AS0044I Calcutta SUNDAY in English
4 Sep 93 pp 81-82

[Article by Avirook Sen and M.V. Kher]

[Text] In view of the polls to the state Assembly in November, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has started preparations in right earnest. For, recent changes in the party's organisational set-up in the state, especially the shifting of Kushabhau Thakre from Madhya Pradesh, are clear indications that the high command has been forced to sit up and think hard over the party's future in the state.

What was the reason?

When the BJP came to power in Madhya Pradesh with a rousing mandate in the 1990 Assembly elections, the party was run by the troika of Thakre, the general secretary of the BJP in charge of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, Kailash Sarang, former general secretary of the party's state unit and chief minister Sunderlal Patwa.

In fact, so strong was the troika's grip on the party, that it came to be known as the high command of the state BJP. The troika also had the blessing of the Rajmata of Gwalior, Vijayaraje Scindia, and her close aide, Sambhaji Rao Angre.

But this troika received a severe blow when the party high command replaced Thakre with Sunder Singh Bhandari, the senior vice-president of the party and put him in charge of Madhya Pradesh.

In fact, differences of opinion cropped up in 1990 when Sunderlal Patwa and Kailash Joshi vied for the chief ministership. L.K. Advani, the central observer of the party, got Patwa elected unopposed as the leader of the BJP Legislature Party with the help of the Rajmata and Thakre. So, Joshi refused to join the state Cabinet until last year, when the party high command finally managed to soothe his ruffled feathers.

Again last year, former chief minister Virendra Kumar Saklecha was defeated by Lakhiram Agarwal—supported by the troika—in the fight for the party presidentship of the state unit. But with the imposition of President's Rule in the state in December last, cracks developed in the organisation.

However, things came to a head in May this year, when it was time for organisational polls in the party. Kailash Joshi bid for the state party president's post. And of course, Agarwal with Thakre's blessings, was his rival.

This sparked off a furore. While Joshi offered to accept anyone other than Agarwal as the candidate, Thakre was adamant. Pyarelal Khandelwal and state BJP general secretary, Narayan Prasad Gupta, joined hands with Joshi. Other party members, who were also against Agarwal, couldn't come out openly in favour of Joshi as they were afraid that they would be denied tickets for the Assembly elections likely to be held in November.

Though the BJP high command refused to intervene, it made its feelings clear. It preferred a candidate acceptable to all as the president and advised against a contest. Similarly, the RSS kept silent on the issue. And, Thakre had his say. Lakhiram Agarwal was elected by a huge majority. He secured 228 votes against Joshi, who could manage a paltry 98.

In a press conference after the election, Joshi fumed, "Agarwal would never have won had it not been for the intervention of Thakre and the Rajmata." Thus, the rift between the dissidents and the establishment widened. So the high command was left with no other option than to go in for a major shake-up, which resulted in the removal of Thakre.

This led to jubilation among the dissidents. Former chief minister Saklecha welcomed the move. "The appointment of Bhandari to take charge of Madhya Pradesh will mean that everyone in the party will get a patient hearing," said Saklecha. On the other hand, Patwa, who was quite unhappy, was evasive, saying: "I do not wish to discuss the issue."

Thus, the two-day executive meeting of the state BJP—held on 14 and 15 July at Raipur—assumed tremendous significance. And, with Bhandari at the helm, the dissidents have every reason to look forward to a fair share of responsiblity in the party's functioning.

Therefore, the recent changes indicate that the party high command is not going to tolerate any dissidence in the party ranks. And, with elections to the state Assembly just four months away, more heads might roll as the BJP would not leave anything to chance.

* BJP Said Campaigning for Divided Madhya Pradesh

94AS0009A New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 28 Sep 93 p 2

[Article by Mahesh Panday: "BJP Making Chhattis Garh an Issue"]

[Text] Bhopal, 26 September—The BJP is planning to raise the issue of a separate Chattisgarh state during the next vidhan sabha elections. The state BJP working committee has approved the proposal to include this issue in the state election manifesto. The manifesto committee could not finish its work as the former Chief Minister Sunder Lal Patwa was sick. The final draft of this manifesto could not be finished, either. The state BJP has to present the election manifesto to the working committee by 3rd October. It does not seem to be possible now. There is a possibility that the deadline will be extended and the meeting may be held on 6 October.

This is the first time that a political party is making the demand for a separate state of Chattisgarh. In the BJP central manifesto issued during the last elections, it had asked for reorganization of all states, and supported separate statehood for Uttranchal in Uttar Pradesh, Vananchal in Bihar, and Vidarbha in Maharashtra. However, the central leadership of the party needed recommendation from its state unit to make demands such as separate Chattisgarh and Bundhelkhand.

It is believed that the state BJP working committee has said that this largest state needed reorganization in order to prosper. Mr. Advani had said in the Gandhi Nagar convention of the party that he was not opposed to division of states. However, the state unit had never formed a clear stand about Madhya Pradesh. The central leaders have always avoided answering question about a separate state of Chattisgarh. They had always said that the situation in Madhya Pradesh is different.

It was Pawan Diwan who had first raised the slogan for a separate Chhattis Garh. He had also formed a separate party. Later, he had joined the Congress Party at Arjun Singh's advice. Subsequently, Chandulal Chandrakar of the Congress (I) had formed an all-parties state reorganization platform. Mr. Chandrakar is its organizer. During Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's 17 April visit to Raipur, this platform was going to present him with its demand, however, it did not do that. The state Congress is in a dilemma over the Chhattis Garh demand. The Janata Dal has supported this campaign. The Shukla Brothers of the Congress Party are opposed to it.

After the prime minister's April visit to Raipur, Jhumak Lal Bhedia, an Arjun Singh supporter, blamed Chandrakar for his weak leadership for his failure in getting the important social issue as Chhattis Garh to the attention of the prime minister. The people had hoped that the arrival of Chandrakar, the All India Congress Committee spokesman, would mean establishment of Congress offices at district and county levels. However, he could not even present a request to the prime minister. He objected to former Chief Minister Motilal Vora's statement demanding that Congress members who are associated with the demand for a separate state should leave the party.

Home Minister Rajesh Pilot had assured the deputation that had presented the proposal for Chattisgarh state in April 1992 that the central government was planning to announce a policy about small state proposals like the one for Chattisgarh within 10-15 days. He had said that the central government was seriously considering the demand for Chattisgarh. According to the deputation members, Mr. Pilot had told them that there were about half a dozen similar campaigns including for Jharkhand, Bodoland, and Uttranchal. The Center was going to make a decision on these all at one time.

The BJP is now seriously considering making a separate Chattisgarh state an election matter as it was looking for such a popular issue. It had similarly promised pardoning all debts in 1990. Before it printed the poster promising pardoning every farmer's debt' in 1990, the BJP had calculated that it would cost 10 million rupees to write off these debts and half of it would have been received from the central government.

Congress (I)

* Infighting Said Damaging Congress in Madhya Pradesh

93AS1000I Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 8 Jul 93 p 7

[Article: "Infighting May Mar Congress(I) Chances in M.P."]

[Text] Bhopal, July 7.—Even though the Congress(I) Working Committee in its political resolution adopted during its Bhopal meeting recently indicated that it was in a position to counter the BJP's "game of division, calumny and innuendo," the past week in Madhya Pradesh witnessed infighting in the party getting worse.

This has led to political observers as well as senior party leaders expressing "doubts as to whether the Congress(I) would be able to effectively unite before the Assembly polls in the State."

According to political observers, the situation seems more alarming because the animosity that existed between the Shukla faction and the Human Resources Development Minister, Mr Arjun Singh, was never made so blatantly public before.

As soon as Mr Arjun Singh got up to speak during the Prime Minister's public meeting, a group of young men started shouting slogans in support of the Shukla brothers in order to suppress Mr Singh's speech. It was only when Mr P. V. Narasimha Rao himself intervened that the shouting stopped.

It was later learnt that the group was "managed" by the M.P. Youth Congress(I) president, Mr Mukesh Nayak, an activist of the Shukla camp with the "blessings" of the Union Minister. But worse was to follow.

The next day an advertisement was released in a local newspaper with Mr Rao's picture along with those of Mr Arjun Singh and the PCC(I) chief, Mr Digvijay Singh, who is thought to be close to the Human Resources Minister.

The advertisement read: "Mr Prime Minister, be careful of the forces next to you. They are the ones responsible for the allegations against you. You should recognize these elements and remove them from the party."

The advertisement was released ostensibly by "the Narasimha Rao fans club" and carried the photographs of Mr V. C. Shukla, his brother, Mr S. C. Shukla, and Mr Mukesh Nayak.

However, according to party sources this crude attempt to malign Mr Arjun Singh has caused severe embarrassment to Mr V. C. Shukla.

Not only did several Youth Congress(I) members and some PCC(I) members submit a memorandum to the convenor of the coordination committee for MP, Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, against the Youth Congress(I) president, but the PCC(I) president, Mr Digvijay Singh, has also reportedly taken up the matter with the Congress(I) president, Mr Rao.

When contacted Mr Singh told this correspondent: "The party High Command is well aware of the goings on in the MP Congress(I) and whatever has happened in the State recently has been viewed very seriously. Let's see what the High Command now decides."

According to party sources Mr Singh also met the Prime Minister separately during the CWC(I) meeting and had said that if the proclamations of unity were not translated into practice in MP, then it would be impossible for the party to perform well at the hustings.

Mr Rao had apparently assured him that unity would be maintained at all costs.

Meanwhile, senior Congressmen in the State attribute the "increased bitterness" of the Shukla faction to a variety of reasons.

According to a former Speaker of the MP Assembly and a senior leader from Chhatisgarh "The Bhopal CWC(I) meeting was the first after a long time that was called not to discuss the actions of Human Resource Minister. On the contrary, he played a very significant role as member of the core group to chalk out the strategy to counter the Harshad Mehta threats and the BJP."

"The growing importance of the Union Minister obviously has not gone down well with the Shukla lobby," he said.

Mr Mahesh Joshi, general secretary of the PCC(I) said: "Mr Arjun Singh has all along opted for a forceful strategy against the BJP. The political resolution has finally proved him correct as the High Command was forced to concede to his view point."

Another adverse fallout of the recent happenings is that the plans to unite the second and third rung leaders working in the districts has gone totally awry.

Mr K. P. Singh, a former MLA and a bitter rival of the Human Resources Minister admits "one of the pledges takes during the Dabra unity meeting recently (near Gwalior where leaders of various factions had resolved to stay united), was to spread the message of unity to smaller leaders and the grassroots workers. But if obvious rivalry persists among seniors then it is going to prove difficult." He also agreed that there was serious factionalism within the party.

With PCC(I) members and other Congressmen taking digs at each other, "real work" such as implementing the PCC(I) action plan and strengthening the organization has taken a backseat.

* Congress Seeking Harijan, Tribal Vote in Madhya Pradesh

94AS0045D Cochin THE WEEK in English 5 Sep 93 p 38

[Article by R. Prasannan: "Tilting Backwards"]

[Text] Poor Shyama Charan Shukla. He declined a Lok Sabha ticket in 1991, hoping that his party would win the next assembly election and he would be the chief minister. Ironically, as some of the party strategists see it, Shukla would have to forsake his dream if his party is to be voted to power.

The party believes that it has its backward, Harijan, tribal and Muslim votes intact in Madhya Pradesh, and the Arjun Singh faction thinks that projection of a Harijan or tribal as the next chief minister will greatly help the party wrest power. And Shukla, the strongest aspirant, is a Brahmin.

The Arjun Singh group, led by state party president Digvijay Singh, made the chief ministerial demand at a massive conference of scheduled castes and tribes it organised on August 18. The other factions neither supported nor opposed the demand; they could not suggest an alternative winning strategy. The other issue, which the Arjun Singh group forced the rest of the party to espouse, is more jobs to the scheduled castes and tribes.

The strategy makes sense. The BJP government of Sunderlal Patwa did little for the scheduled castes and tribes. In fact, it even stopped the special recruitment drive, with the result that there are now 15,000 reserved vacancies. One of the demands of the Arjun Singh group has been that these posts be filled now and the Governor's administration has begun to act.

It is not the fear of the BJP alone that has compelled the Congress to espouse the cause. The Bahujan Samaj Party is making inroads into these traditional vote banks of the Congress. The BSP has declared that it will contest all the 320 seats but the Congress is hopeful of at least a tacit understanding with it.

"The Patwa government committed a lot of atrocities on Harijans and tribals," alleged a Congress functionary. According to him, most of the victims of the police firing in Bhilai in July last year and the police raid in Garoth village last year were Harijans. Similarly, most of those killed in the police firing on the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha procession were tribals. And to get the tribal votes, the Congress is claiming credit for the Governor's decision to give Rs 113 crore as bonus to tendu-leaf pickers, which had been withheld by the BJP government.

Wooing Harijans and tribals is the only strategy that the embattled party can think of now. Coupled with this is Arjun Singh's anti-communal line which is expected to bring in the Muslim votes.

While Congressmen are scheming without doing much legwork, BJP leaders are touring the constituencies without a clear strategy. Most of them admit that the Patwa government was not a success as the Kalyan Singh government of Uttar Pradesh. And the national leadership has not yet told them what they should focus on—Ayodhya, dismissal of the democratically elected government, corruption in high places or achievements of the BJP government.

Yet, unlike the Congress, the BJP has activated its election machinery. A workshop was held for 225 leaders of the party cells in early August. Activity cells have been started in 3,250 panchayats and, according to state general secretary Raghavji, the campaign would be conducted by about 10 lakh workers. The trained 225 leaders have fanned out in the vast state to train lower-level functionaries on organising meetings and rallies and reaching out to the voter. In contrast, the Congress offices present a dull picture—there is hardly any public-contract programme.

In summ, the BJP is bereft of ideas—so much so that it has invited intellectuals to suggest ideas for an election manifesto—but rich in activity. The Congress has ample ideas but is lethargic. The fight, for now, is between ideas and action.

* Congress (I) Going After Backwards' Vote in Madhya Pradesh

94AS0040A New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 5 Oct 93 p 2

[Article: "Congress Strategy To Get Backwards' Vote in Madhya Pradesh"]

[Text] Bhopal, 4 October. Basantrao Ouikey, president of the Madhya Pradesh Backward Castes Commission, told the central Welfare Minister Sita Ram Kesari, "The Congress (I) will suffer if the Mandal Commission recommendations are not implemented before the elections." In response, Kesari lashed at the top level state officials, the intellectuals, and the cunning group in the government in his speech and said, "The government directive has been issued on 8 September and no power in the world can stop it. You may have to give up your jobs." This was the scene at the meeting held in Mr. Kesari's honor in Bhopal's Ravinder Bhawan on Saturday.

In Madhya Pradesh, the Congress (I) wants to take the credit for implementing the Mandal recommendations for the backward classes so that it can benefit in the vidhan sabha elections. By starting this new debate between the central and the state governments, the Congress (I) wants to kill several birds with one stone. These are: (1) By declaring 39.4 percent job reservation for backward class members as recommended by the Mahajan Commission, it wants to get them on its side. (2) By accusing state government for the 50,000 transfers made during the presidential rule, it wants to stay out of it so that the problems of the presidential rule are not blamed on the Congress (I). (3) Making Arjun Singh the messiah of the backward classes by this strategy, and (4) Combating Kanshi Ram.

Mr. Kesari did take the state government to task in this state Congress (I) meeting, however, he did not explain that according to the Supreme Court reservation over 50 percent is not possible. When the former chief minister Shyamacharan Shukla said that there were not many government jobs available and new jobs were being created

in the private sector, Kesari replied that some people are talking about not having enough jobs available, but the reservation system will make the backward classes equal opportunity available.

Mr. Kesari was introduced as the first leader after Jawahar Lal Nehru to bring a new revolution to the nation. Mr. Kesari praised the prime minister who was a Brahman and still appointed the backward class Kesari as welfare minister and having him announce the Mandal decision. He said that not only Hindus but Sikhs, Muslims, and Buddhists were included in the 27 percent quota.

The root cause of this controversy in Madhya Pradesh is the already existing reservation system here. The state already has reserved 37 percent of government jobs for aborigine and backward class applicants. Former Chief Minister Arjun Singh had appointed Mahajan Commission in 1981 to identify backward classes and recommend reservation quotas for them. The Mahajan Commission identified 39.4 percent of the state's population to be backward. A total of 82 castes and 343 sub-castes were declared backward. Now if they add the proposed 27 percent reservation to the present 37 percent state reservation system, the total of 63 percent will surpass the 50 percent limit.

The way the state Congress (I) is pushing for this issue during the last 15 days makes one think that the presidential rule in the state does not want to implement it on purpose. Digvijay Singh, president of the State Congress (I) Party, has threatened that if the government does not make an announcement about its reservation policy by 2 October, the Congress (I) will start a campaign for it. Mr. Singh said from the stage in Ravinder Bhawan that Madhya Pradesh was the only state where the backward classes have no reserved quotas. How can the Congress (I) show its face to the backward classes? If the governor does not take any action about it then the Congress (I) will be forced to take political action over it. Until the people of upper castes change their minds, the backward classes will not get social justice. Tariq Anwar said that Mr. Kesari will have to twirl his staff and force the state governments that are dragging their feet to take action about it.

After Sita Ram Kesari's prompting and threat by the state Congress (I) to start a campaign and political action to force this issue, Madhya Pradesh governor Mohammed Shafi Qureshi softened his attitude. He announced in Jagdalpur yesterday that the recommendations made by Mahajan and Mandal commissions will be implemented in the state soon. Only four days ago, the governor had told the newsmen in informal conversation in Raj Bhawan that it was not possible to increase reservation for backward classes by more than 13 percent. The state already had 37 percent reservation for Harijans and aborigine tribes. The Supreme Court order does not allow the total reservation quota to be over 50 percent. The Indian government has decided on reserving 27 percent of central government jobs for backward classes.

Governor Qureshi had said four days ago that he would prefer the elected representatives to make this decision after the vidhan sabha elections rather than his making this decision. However, the governor changed his tune after Kesari's rebuke. Thus, he has been forced to forget his references to elections.

State Congress (I) President Digvijay Singh says that at a time when Kanshi Ram is spreading hatred and trying to influence 85 percent of the people, we need to contemplate about it. However, Mr. Ouikey said that he has heard that Mr. Kesari is in full control of the election committees in the four states.

When he distributes tickets for the election, he must keep the 85 percent population in mind. If he did not give tickets to [those who represent] the 85 percent of people, then it would be difficult to win majority votes.

Kesari and many other speakers took the Janata Dal and V.P. Singh to task for having a reservation policy based on political vested interest. At this meeting held to celebrate Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary the flower garlands brought for Mr. Kesari were presented to Gandhi's picture because of the ban on meetings after the earthquake in Maharashtra. At the end of the meeting, Congress (I) election ticket hopefuls with resumes in their hands began to give their applications to Mr. Kesari.

* Congress (I) Said Gaining in Madhya Pradesh

94AS0061F Bombay THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA in English 22 Oct 93 pp 28-29

[Article by Dibang: "Scindia's Whistle-Stop Diplomacy"]

[Text] Mau, a small town in Bhind district of Madhya Pradesh, is in the grip of an election fever. Thousands of cheering followers line up along the road. Housetops and balconies overflow with enthusiastic supporters. And everytime Madhavrao Scindia, standing in a jeep, waves, the crowd surges forward to get near him. The temporary welcome arches give way under the frenzy of the jostling crowds.

The rally at Mau marked the high-voltage start to an arduous electoral race. Surrounded by 'surcharged party workers who had braved a torrential downpour', Scindia-supporter Amar Singh told THE WEEKLY, "The tremendous success of this rally shows that people now recognise Scindia's sincerity. His style of functioning has benefited them. This time, with our grassroot-network, we will be able to convert his charisma and sincerity into votes." These sentiments were appropriately summed up in the most-often heard slogan in the region, Dharati aur aakash ka, Madhavrao vikas ka."

For once, workers belonging to various Congress factions had joined hands for the rally, underlining the fact that Scindia can play a pivotal role by emerging as a unifying force in the state.

Immediately after the meeting, Scindia was congratulated by Arjun Singh. Similarly, V.C. Shukla has also made moves to get Scindia on his side. People have also not forgotten the fact that at Dabara, earlier in May this year, Scindia had brought the warring state chieftains Arjun

Singh, the Shukla brothers and Motilal Vora, on one platform, and each one of them had stressed the need for unity.

In fact, the main problem confronting the party in the state is that these top leaders have been engaged in a war of attrition. According to a veteran journalist from Bhopal, this time the ground reality is that people are for the Congress but it will win only if it presents a united front.

Asked if a united Congress would be able to trounce the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] in the state, the former BJP deputy chief minister, Kailash Joshi said, "There is a very big if. They are not together at the centre. They will not stay united in the state. But we admit it will be a tough fight and we are preparing accordingly."

However, the Congress sources feel that despite the differences the party will have no problems in selecting candidates for as many as 220 seats out of 320, in the state assembly. An actual difference of opinion could be for around 25-30 seats. But Ghulam Nabi Azad, who is coordinating the elections in the state, is hopeful about the future. Said he, "There will be a difference of opinion in the party only as long as the tickets are not distributed. Once a ticket is given to a candidate, every worker will support him. We have to win this time. A difference of opinion among the party leaders is not something new, but our workers are united. A disciplined party like the BJP is even more divided than us. The way they have been hurling abuses at each other is unprecedented."

He has a point. Differences in the state BJP unit are well-known. The former chief minister, Sundar Lal Patwa, Lakhiram Agarwal and Khushabhao Thakre who is referred to as the Bhishma Pitamah are ranged against V.K. Saklecha, Joshi and Uma Bharati. In fact, there was a virtual revolt against Patwa when as many as 140 MLAs [Members of Legislative Assembly] submitted a memorandum against him. But Thakre has denied the existence of any such memorandum. According to him, it is all a cooked-up story.

Joshi, on the other hand, admitted that such a memorandum was submitted by 125 MLAs. But now the differences have been sorted out, he claimed.

The party, however, does not seem to have enough faith in Patwa. That is the reason why though Kalyan Singh, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and Shanta Kumar are projected as the next chief ministers in UP [Uttar Pradesh], Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, there is no such projection for MP [Madhya Pradesh]. Even after repeated questioning, Joshi, who is likely to be the next chief minister in case the party wins, went no further than saying that the decision would be left to the party leadership.

According to a BJP insider, MP is regarded as a tricky state by the party. However, the party's chances in MP are rated a shade better than in Himachal Pradesh which is considered to be almost out of its grip.

An important factor in MP is the emergence of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). Of the 320 seats in the assembly, 121 are reserved, and the BSP has made its presence felt in these segments.

Nonetheless, the field is wide open for the two parties. In as many as 150 seats, observers expect a narrow win. There is a sharp polarisation of votes in the state and as in the past, a minor swing would bring in dramatic results.

In the 1989 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP had an electoral adjustment with the National Front which helped them bag 27 out of 40 seats in the state polls, 40.51 per cent of the votes. The Congress secured a paltry eight with 37.96 per cent votes. The Janata Dal [JD] polled 8.15 per cent votes and walked away with three seats. One seat went to an independent.

A year later in the assembly polls, the BJP romped home with 219 seats with 39 per cent votes, while the Congress trailed with 56 seats and 33.54 per cent votes. The JD polled 28 seats with 7.71 per cent votes. And the BSP got two seats with 3.53 per cent votes.

In the 1991 mid-term poll, from 27 seats, the BJP slipped to 12 and from 8, the Congress jumped to 27. Interestingly, compared to 1989, the BJP improved its votes percentage to 41.88 and the Congress polled 45.34 per cent votes. Another significant point is that in the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress was ahead of its rival in 187 assembly segments. They had the edge in only 113 segments.

Delinking of religion from politics, social justice and corruption during the Patwa regime would be the main issues for the Congress. The BJP will focus on the Ram Mandir, corruption during the governor's rule and the development work undertaken by the Patwa government.

The BJP claims to be strong in Madhya Bharat, Malwa and the Bundelkhand region. In the Madhya Bharat region, the Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia commands considerable influence. There are over 50 assembly seats in the region. Besides the growing influence of Madhavrao Scindia, the BSP has also made its presence felt in this region. However, there is a considerable Muslim population which is likely to back the Congress. The BJP sources claim that most of the 24 seats in Bundelkhand area may go to the party. But after bitter differences between Patwa and Bharan, who belongs to this region, there is a lot of resentment among the BJP supporters.

Chhatisgarh, Mahakaushal and Vindhya regions are the Congress strongholds. The Shukla brothers and Vora have assiduously nursed Chhatisgarh, which has 90 seats. Observers feel that despite the BJP's efforts to mobilise support in the region during the Janadesh Yatra, the party has drawn a blank. Though Lakhiram Agarwal comes from this area, he has been rendered ineffective as he is alleged to be the main beneficiary of the tendu leaf policy. Incidentally, Agarwal is a tendu leaf contractor. Also, the BJP could not do much to ameliorate the plight of the tribals in the region.

The Mahakaushal region with 38 seats has rested traditionally with the Congress. Congress stalwart Arjun Singh hails from Vindhya and he would help the party sail through in about 30 seats of the region. But BSP may also have some pockets of influence.

Finally, on paper, it seems that those enthusiastic Congress supporters from Mau may march in a victory procession to the Vidhan Sabha building in Bhopal. But then, considering the narrow margins, the state capital just might witness a saffron flag-march in the first week of December.

Outlook

* Congress, BJP Plagued by Factionalism in Rajasthan

94AS0045B Cochin THE WEEK in English
5 Sep 93 pp 36-37

[Article by Vijaya Pushkarna: "Groping for a Strategy"]

[Text] It is a problem of plenty for the Congress in Rajasthan. One too many chief ministerial candidates and add to that there are four former chief ministers, the PCC president and a dozen septuagenarian leaders jostling for tickets for their supporters.

"Every worker is an aspirant for the chief minister's post," confesses Suraj Khatri, PCC general secretary. He is all for having his president Parsh Ram Maderna projected as the next chief minister. "There are bound to be dozens of claimants as the party is full of talent. But the high command will sort out all that," says Chandan Mal Baid, who would have Harideo Singh Joshi grace the chief minister's chair once again.

"The fight between the Maderna and the Joshi groups is so intense that we have formed a group to work for unity," explains former minister Narendra Singh Bhati. In the process, the peace-makers have become a third faction, backing former chief minister Jagannath Pahadia.

Then there is Nawal Kishore Sharma to reckon with. "Sharma will watch the interest of Jitendra Prasad, who wants to be UP chief minister, and Ahmed Patel in Gujarat. In return, they will look after his interest in Rajasthan," says a party office-bearer.

On July 15, Narasimha Rao summoned Joshi and Maderna and advised them to straighten out the creases. Both agreed and even made an attempt but the party fabric does not seem to have been ironed out yet.

The situation is no better in the BJP where it is a tug of war between the RSS and the non-RSS sections. With the electoral prospects of the BJP having brightened over the years, thanks largely to the temple issue aired by the RSS and the VHP, the RSS lobby wants its share of profits. Dissidence did not plague Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, the dismissed chief minister, not because the RSS lobby loved him. He could convince everyone about the importance of humouring the Janata Dal legislators supporting his minority government. But now Shekhawat has no such alibi. And like in the Congress, there are the younger elements itching to don his mantle.

Shekhawat, maintains that there are "differences but no dissent." Though no one is being projected as the chief minister, Shekhawat notes that "the pulse of the people is very clear (implying in his favour). The party is projecting and reflecting the feelings of the public."

In the last assembly elections, the BJP-Janata Dal alliance contested 80 seats each and had friendly contests in the remaining 40 seats. But the BJP turned the friendly encounters into serious fight in at least 17 constituencies and won 85 seats, while the Janata Dal got 55 and the Congress 50. When the BJP withdrew support to the V.P. Singh government, the Janata Dal deserted Shekhawat's coalition. Yet, he won over 26 Janata Dal MLAs led by Digvijay Singh. Later, 14 of them joined the BJP while Digvijay Singh walked over to the Congress, last month. The other Dal MLAs split into three groups, of which the Samajwadi Janata Party alone commands some influence.

"Shekhawat became chief minister when the non-Congress parties joined hands in 1977 and 1990. Now the BJP is going it alone, so it is advantage Congress," says Chandan Mal Baid. But he seems to have overlooked the fact that a sizeable section of the Janata Dal members have joined the BJP, thus reducing the importance of an alliance. Besides, the BJP has gained a sharper profile since the Babri Masjid demolition.

Shekhawat would prefer to highlight his performance and contrast it with that of the previous Congress government as well as the Governor's administration. He alleges that the Governor has suspended all welfare and development schemes launched by him and has gone on a transfer spree to appease the Congress.

What he does not allege, but some Congressmen do, is that the transfers were done at the behest of Pahadia. The Congress on its part would focus on the poor performance of Shekhawat. Maderna says that the BJP government had halted all rural development works and could not prevent communal riots from breaking out in 16 places. "Shekhawat's ministers had been raising slogans like Musalman ke do hain sthan, Pakistan ya kabristan (Pakistan or the graveyard for Muslims). We shall highlight all that," says Umed Khan Didwana, a Congress worker.

Muslims form a little over 10 per cent of the electorate. Incidentally, the large-scale transfers and promotions by Governor Bali Ram Bhagat have fetched plum posts for members from the minorities and weaker sections. Many Congressmen feel that Bhagat is redeeming his debt to Pahadia for help rendered when he was the Governor of Bihar. And they believe that with a padayatra from the Ajmer Dargah to the Govind Dev Temple in Jaipur via Pushkar, Pahadia has tried to counter the BJP.

"I am only on leave from office," says Shekhawat. "He is on leave pending retirement," retorts Harideo Joshi in another election-related meeting. Voters are going to be reminded about Shekhawat's constituency-hopping (he has contested from 12 different constituencies) Joshi's poor health, Nawal Kishore Sharma's ambition, Balram Jakhar's manipulations. And Ayodhya and the two religion bills will keep the pot boiling. It is clearly going to be sweating time in the desert this November, whatever low temperatures barometers may show.

*** Rajasthan Polls: Parties Reported Getting Ready**

94AS0002B Bombay TIMES OF INDIA in English 15 Sep 93 p 9

[Article by R.C. Srivastava]

[Text] Jaipur, 14 Sep—Politicians in Rajasthan have roused themselves and both the BJP and the Congress have begun preparations for the elections to the vidhan sabha, expected to be held in November. The Governor, Mr Bali Ram Bhagat, is understood to have conveyed to the Center that the law and order situation in the state is condusive for holding elections. This has reportedly prompted even the smaller parties, Janata Dal (A) and the Janata Dal (B), to explore the possibility of seat adjustments in some areas to prevent return of either the BJP or the Congress candidates. Party functionaries are gearing up for the elections even though some of the leaders are engaged elsewhere. Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, former chief minister, is currently away leading the jandesh yatra from Jammu to Bhopal. State Congress leaders, including Mr Harideo Joshi, former chief minister, and Mr Paras Ram Maderna, PCC president, are engaged in factionalism. Since the poll managers of both the BJP and the Congress feel that the electoral battle will be a straight contest, their leaders have already started assessing the prospects of their respective parties constituency-wise on the basis of caste composition, development and local issues. While the PCC has invited applications from prospective candidates between September 20 and October 5, the state BJP has fixed the dates for the purpose from October 1 to 5. These applications will be processed within a week and sent to the district units. Then the state BJP and the PCC will forward the lists to their respective central parliamentary boards. As part of the preparations the BJP organized special camps at the district and block levels to train its volunteers to prevent booth-capturing. The Congress organized divisional conventions of party workers and exhorted them to mobilize people against communalism. Following the merger of the two factions of the Janata Dal (D) with the BJP and the Congress respectively, the remaining two JD outfits, the JD(A) and the JD(B) are expected to cut little ice with the electorate except in some pockets. Thereafter, it appears that the fight in most of the 200 vidhan sabha constituencies will be a direct one, between the BJP and the Congress. Last time the BJP had contested the elections in alliance with the JD and won 85 seats. The alliance had benefitted the JD too, which won 56 seats. The Congress had won 51. Mr Shekhawat became the chief minister but within three months some of the JD members felt disenchanted with his leadership. Apprehending trouble, Mr Shekhawat dropped two of them from the ministry, thwarting the Congress' attempts to dislodge his government. The Congress tried again in November 1990 after the fall of the V.P. Singh government at the Center following the withdrawal of support by the BJP. Mr Shekhawat then engineered a split in the 56-member JD and formed a coalition government with the 26-member JD(D) as its junior partner. Riding on the "Ram wave" and on the strength of the electoral alliance with the JD, the BJP again captured power in the state in 1990. While, the state JD has already been split into various outfits, the BJP is once again trying to whip up the ferver generated over the Ram temple by proclaiming that religion cannot be separated from politics and that the Ayodhya issue will remain on top of its agenda. BJP leaders, including Mr Ram Das Agarwal, president of the state party unit, are confident that the party will return to power not only because of the Hindutva euphoria but due to the track record of the party's government. Congress leaders, on the other hand, feel that President's rule has augured well for the state. They maintain that inflation has been checked and crop prospects have improved due to good monsoon. Besides, the party's hold over cooperative societies in rural areas and the Shekhawat government's decision to supercede gram panchayats and its failure to hold elections will benefit them, they say.

*** BJP Seen Ahead in Rajasthan Preparations**

94AS0040C New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 6 Oct 93 p 2

[Article: "BJP Ahead in Rajasthan Election Preparations"]

[Text] Jaipur, 6 October. In the total picture of vidhan sabha election preparations in Rajasthan, the BJP appears to be very active while other parties seem to be lethargic. This had caused worries in other party camps that they will be left way behind by the BJP.

The main race in this state is between the Congress (I) and the BJP. However, the Congress (I) does not appear to be prepared to push out the BJP and take over the state government from it. Its internal strife is the main hindrance in competing with the BJP. Meanwhile the BJP is giving the impression of being fully prepared to face it in the election. That is why the BJP leaders and officials are full of enthusiasm and the Congress (I) leaders and officials appears to be upset because of the internal struggle. There seems to be a major difference between both parties from top to bottom in the areas of unity, zeal, confidence, morale, and team spirit.

The Janata Dal which had emerged as the second party during the last election is struggling to maintain its political existence as the third stringer here. This party which has been disintegrating piece-by-piece is showing some hope now that its three factions (Janata Dal A, B, S) might merge. Even when united, there are doubts about this party's ability to reinstate its lost prestige among the voters. At present, the whole election effort of the Janata Dal is focused on reunification. All other preparations such as organizational structure, selection of candidates, printing manifesto, starting the propaganda campaign, advertising material, and raising money have not even been started. No basic plans for these have been decided. This work will begin only after agreement among the top leaders over the distribution of positions is made.

Delay in election preparation because of the reunification details is worrying everyone in this party from state leaders to lowly workers. Even after the announcement to merge Janata Dal A, B, and S, the leaders of various factions are still issuing differing statements and are accepting applications and fees for elections tickets at different levels. The

coordination committee of the three factions was dismissed before it could do anything and plans are being made to form another committee now! To this end, leaders of the three factions are dashing to Delhi.

The National Front has agreed to run for elections in coalition with the Left Front. However, because the face of Janata Dal has not emerged clearly from the reunification process, no election talks have taken place between the Janata Dal and the Left Front parties. The Left Front has already decided on some candidates without discussing it with the Janata Dal. Janata Dal's state chief Sampat Ram has criticized this and said that this would hinder united efforts in the election campaign.

He accused the leaders of other Janata Dal factions for issuing absurd statements and has called them anti-unity elements. He has told the workers to be careful of these leaders. Just like in the Congress (I), there appears to be no decision made about Janata Dal tickets. It appears that because of the air of uncertainty in this party just like in Congress (I), all decisions will be made in Delhi.

BJP

* BJP Seen Strong in Rajasthan

94AS0009C New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 28 Sep 93 p 2

[Article: "Shekhawat May Run From Jaipur Seat"]

[Text] Jaipur, 27 September—The challengers for the five vidhan sabha seats in the state capital Jaipur have started to hover around the leaders. Jaipur is the stronghold of the BJP. The BJP had won all the vidhan sabha seats here during the last elections. Even during the election before the last one, the BJP had shown its strength here by winning four seats. However, there is a lot of turmoil about the upcoming elections because of some of the former legislators' activities. Meanwhile, there have been 141 applicants for the five Congress (I) seats. This has encouraged the Congress (I) camp. The candidates who had lost here the last time have pitted claims on seats in other districts. There are rumors that former Chief Minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat will run for elections for one of the city seats.

The list of party candidates will be prepared in the 28 September meeting of the district Congress (I) working committee. The city Congress (I) committee is still disputing. The state Congress (I) committee has endorsed the committee chairman Suresh Sharma. Meanwhile, the former committee chairman, Raj Kumar Kala, is also running his store in the name of this committee. Because of the dispute between the two chairmen, the Congress (I) workers in the city are also divided. The committee headed by Suresh Sharma will make the list of the Congress (I) candidates. Mr. L. P. Shahi, the supervisor from the Party's central office, will be present in the meeting of this group. The work to hear the applicants for Congress (I) tickets will start on Sunday and Monday. A four-member committee has been formed to review the applicants. According to Congress (I) sources, 43 persons have requested for election ticket for the Bani Park district. The applications for other districts are as follows: Hawa Mahal 20, Kishanpol 31, Johri Bazaar 30, and from rural Jaipur 17.

Hawa Mahal District: Mr. Bhanwar Lal Sharma, the former BJP minister had occupied this seat since 1977. The specialty of this seat is that it can be covered on foot and includes the area covered by the city four walls. Mr. Sharma was the state BJP president and is considered a nice and affable person. This image has helped him win elections without spending any money. He is definitely to get the BJP ticket again. However, some BJP people want him to run from Jamuva Ramgarh district. This is being done on purpose to give opportunity to others to be elected from an established seat. The Congress (I) has no candidate to challenge Bhanwar Lal Sharma. Even Mahesh Joshi, who lost to Mr. Sharma in the last elections and is the former president of Congress (I) volunteer group, is avoiding running election from this district. Twenty Congress (I) persons have applied for the ticket here, however, none of them is a well-known person.

Johri Bazaar: Mr. Kali Charan Saraf, the BJP state treasurer, had occupied this seat. The Congress (I) had always pitted a Muslim candidate from this district mostly populated by the minorities. The Congress (I) is hesitating from competing from this district this time. Sayyed Khan is pushing for K.L. Jain, his friend and the chairman of Jaipur Stock Exchange, for this seat. Sayyed Khan himself is claiming the rural Jaipur district. Many Congress (I) heavy weights have applied for this district. Suraj Khatri, former joint secretary of the state Congress (I), and former legislator Takiuddin are among them.

The BJP legislator from the dismissed vidhan sabha, Kali Charan Saraf, wants to give up this district. However, he cannot find any more appropriate district in Jaipur.

Bani Park: The Congress (I) wins here some time and the BJP the other times. Rajpal Singh Shekhawat of the BJP was elected from here the last time. This the largest district in Jaipur region. According to the BJP sources, Mr. Shekhawat will definitely get ticket here again. Rajpal Singh had toured the area recently when he felt that he was going to get the ticket for this district. However, not much came out of it. The BJP is using the names of Narpat Singh Rajvi, son-in-law of the former chief minister Shekhawat; Ghansyam Tiwari, the BJP state vice president; and Sunil Bhargav, the youth leader in this district to drum up support.

The Congress (I) is also strongly interested in this seat. Mr. Shiv Ram Sharma had won for the Congress (I) here in the past. The number of prospective candidates from Congress (I) for this seat is the largest, 43. Mr. Shiv Ram Sharma, who lost here during the last elections, did not apply for the ticket here. He has applied for the ticket from Sangner seat next to the city. The leading candidates for the Congress (I) ticket from here are Abhinesh Maharishi, the City Youth Congress (I) president, and a female candidate, Sudha Raina. Sudha Raina has contacts all the way up.

Rural Jaipur: This seat was occupied by Ujla Arora of the BJP since 1977. Ujla Arora is a member of legislator Girdhari Lal Bhargav's group. The state BJP is in the

mood to make a change in this district. If Kali Charan Saraf does not run election from Johri Bazaar, it is definite that he will run from this district.

Seventeen persons have requested for the Congress (I) ticket for the rural Jaipur district. This is the only seat from where a candidate, Aruna Gaur, has expressed to run again after losing from here. From among those who are applying for the Congress (I) ticket from here are Suresh sharma, city Congress (I) president, and Ramakant Sharma, joint secretary of the state Congress (I).

Kishanpol: The Bjp considers this seat already in its pocket. Legislator Girdhari Lal Bhargav has a strong hold on this seat. During the last elections, the RSS member Rameshwar Bhardwaj Murtikar had won from here with record number of votes. This seat is a subject of lot of discussions this time. The reason for this is the rumor that former chief minister, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, is running election from here. If Mr. Shekhawat does not run from here, the BJP is considering either former legislator Rameshwar Bhardwaj or Ujla Arora who might move from rural jaipur district.

Congress (I)

* Congress (I) Seen Unprepared for Rajasthan Election

94AS0008C New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 10 Sep 93 p 10

[Congress (I) Divided, Unprepared for Election"]

[Text] New Delhi 9 September—Even now, when the vidhan sabha election is just around the corner, the Rajasthan leaders are busy fighting with each other. Jat politics are also behind it. One group of Congress (I) decided to honor the return of Nathu Ram Mirdha after his long sickness on 19 September in Jaipur. At this, the Jat politicians, just to show their rivalry, persuaded the state president Paras Ram Madrena to have a ceremony in his honor. Madrena's supporter decided to have a welcome ceremony for him in Bharatpur on the same day. Now, these two ceremonies will show the weight of camps in Rajasthan politics.

The Rajputs and Jats are two opposite poles in Rajasthan. In 20-25 election districts Rajputs who will determine election results are with the BJP. In 30-35 election districts the Jats who are majority there are opposed to the BJP. At present Nathu Ram Mirdha is the most powerful Jat leader. He used to be a Janata Dal member. That is why he could not run for the organizational election even after joining the Congress (I) and does not have much hold over the party. Even in his home district, Nagaur, his opponents are controlling the district Congress (I) organization. Jagdip Dhankhar had also joined the Congress (I) along with him. Mr. Dhankhar hopes to become Nathu Ram's successor. He is also organizing the ceremony in Mirdha's honor in Jaipur. He had recently asked the central leadership why the persons who were brought to the Congress by Rajiv Gandhi were not allowed to participate in the organizational election. The leaders, after all, have to keep in mind the interest of the party organization.

Mr. Madrena is also a Jat. Mr. Madrena, Ram Niwas Mirdha, and Balram Jakhar are each other's in-laws. They benefit politically from this relationship. However, they do not even have one-fourth of Nathu Ram Mirdha's influence in their community. In Rajasthan, Congress (I) supposedly has two groups. One groups includes Navalkishore Sharma, Haridev Joshi, Chandanmal Vaid, and Hiralal Devpura. Generally speaking, Nathu Ram Mirdha and Jagdip Dhankhar are considered to be with them. However, because of the election politics, they are trying to prove themselves to be a separate group in order to get more elections tickets for themselves. Balram Jakhad, Ram Niwas Mirdha, and Rajesh Pilot are with Madrena. In addition, Ashok Galhot, Jagannath Pahadia, and Shiv Charan Mathur practice their own brand of politics.

The Congress (I) victory in the vidhan sabha elections depends a lot upon the votes of some farm communities. They were first trying to get Ajit Singh's support to get wholesale control of these votes. Now Ajit Singh and Congress (I) are not friendly. On Tuesday, the Rajasthan Janata Dal (I) decided in a meeting to have candidates for 125 seats. This has caused unrest in Rajasthan Congress (I). One Rajasthan leader said that it does not matter whether Janata Dal (A) candidates win or lose, they can be cause of some of our candidates' defeat. This problem would be aggravated because of the Rajasthan Congress' own internal problems. The high command has not been able to unite the Rajasthan Congress leaders yet. The 19 September competition for paying tributes will increase this dissension. According to Jagdip Dhankhar, the organizer of Nathu Ram's tribute, he has not sent out personal invitations. This meeting is said to have the support of Sharma-Joshi camp.

Mr. Dhankhar says about tribute ceremony for Nathu Ram Mirdha that 19 September is an important date for Rajasthan's farmers. This is the day when they pay tribute to the most veteran leader for whom they had worked so hard. As for the tribute observance for Madrena, he says that is rather awkward. Seeing Mirdha's size, no farmer in Rajasthan should be embarrassed to be under his patronage. On one side is the farmer politics and on the other is individual leader's grievances. Ashok Gahlot, president of eastern region, says, "they must pay attention to the youth if they want them to stay with the Congress. A large part of them were with the Congress (I) because of Rajiv Gandhi. We must keep their hopes alive." On the other side is the politics of Shiv Charan Mathur who is dissatisfied with the central leadership.

* Congress (I) Said Set to Win Rajasthan

94AS0046I Madras THE HINDU in English 3 Oct 93 p 9

[Article by Sunny Sebastian]

[Text] It is going to be a different type of festival time for the political parties in Rajasthan this time. The Election Commission's announcement of polls to the 200-strong State Assembly, slated for November 11, has come too

early for the three major parties in the State—the Congress(I), the BJP and the recently united Janata Dal—for varying reasons.

The BJP which was in power when the State was brought under President's rule does not seem to be keen to mix politics with festivals. The party, after initially fighting shy of demanding a later date for the elections for the fear that it would be dubbed as the "reluctance of the party to face elections," has now demanded that the polls be held after Diwali which falls on November 13. The present date, November 11, is going to be inconvenient to the BJP which continues to be essentially a party of urbanites and traders most of whom would be busy selling their wares for the festival.

The Congress(I), which came third with 50 seats (it got another seat in the by-election later) in the February 1990 elections after the BJP (85 seats) and the Janata Dal (55 seats), too was expecting the elections by the end of November or in early December as the BJP-led coalition Government was dismissed on December 15. The party wanted to buy more time to settle its house in order and face the elections with "renewed" enthusiasm. Now the house remains as divided as ever with a plethora of leaders with larger than life ego fighting for a place for themselves and their minions in the nomination list.

The Janata Dal—or perhaps the Janata Dals as there were too many—had been wishing away the elections all the time. While many of its leaders, especially those from the Jat community deserted the party for their former fold, the Congress(I), the remaining groups had been multiplying in number. At a time there were about half-a-dozen Janata Dals in Rajasthan. The Janata Dal (Digvijay), a splinter group which broke away from the party to support the BJP government is no longer there. A section of it, along with 14 former MLAs has joined the BJP and the rest, consisting of 11 former MLAs including the party president, Mr Digvijay Singh, has emerged with the Congress(I). On an earlier occasion, the Janata Dal (Rajasthan), which consisted of eight former MLAs supporting Mr. Nathu Ram Mirdha had joined the Congress(I).

However early election has come as a blessing in disguise for the splinter groups of the Janata Dal as it has brought at least three of them—the Janata Dal(Bommai), the Janata Dal(A) and the Samajwadi Janata Party(SJP)—together, accentuating the process of merger. This, perhaps is going to be the biggest factor in the coming elections. If this group succeeds in capturing more than 20 seats in the State, it will be in a position to decide which of two major parties—the Congress(I) and the BJP—should form the next Government. The three groups, together, had 24 MLAs in the dissolved Assembly.

The two leading contenders for power, the BJP and the Congress(I) are in a neck and neck race. To its advantage the BJP has a leader in the true sense in the veteran, Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat. There is some opposition to him in the party itself, especially from the RSS cadres and its hierarchy but without him the party will not be able to take on the Congress(I) challenge, which is quite formidable in the villages. His detractors, who include the national vice-president of the party, Mr. Sunder Singh Bhandari and the former State Minister for Health, Mr. Lalit Kishore Chaturvedi, are well aware of the indispensability for the party especially when it is not in a position to win hands down in Rajasthan.

The central leadership of the BJP is keeping the leadership options open as it is said to be worried about the consolidation of the Jat votes. The Congress(I) will have to go for a non-Brahmin (the party does not anyway have a Rajput of that stature now) Chief Minister, if it is voted to power. The argument is that the Jats so far have been deprived of this august post and there have been Chief Ministers from all other communities, except perhaps backwards. The BJP leadership is also anxious about the anti-Rajput feeling being whipped up in the villages.

The Janadesh Yatra, led by Mr. Shekhawat from Jammu to Bhopal, covering 1,400 km in Rajasthan en route, did not evoke the response anticipated. Mr. Shekhawat had to give up the last day's tour in Rajasthan covering Jhalawar and Kota districts due to the train accident, near Chhbra, the constituency from where he was elected last time.

The BJP too like the Congress(I) has its share of bickerings. This was manifested during the past fortnight in Kota when Mr. Lalit Kishore Chaturvedi, arch rival of Mr. Shekhawat, was attacked by the so-called moderates in the party with brooms and chappals.

There is a survey now on in the State, being carried out by a professional agency commissioned by the BJP to find out its prospects in Rajasthan. This survey, along with that from other States going to polls soon, would give an idea of the party's prospects. According to Mr. Pramod Mahajan, BJP general secretary, the major election plank of the party would remain the Ayodhya issue.

This is going to be the first Assembly election in which the BJP will be facing the electorate on its own. In the previous elections it had an alliance with the Janata Dal in as many as 160 seats out of the 200.

The BJP appears to be banking on the Congress(I) infighting to help it (BJP) win the elections. However, the caste combinations favour the Congress(I) with the Jats solidly behind it. All prominent Jat leaders in the State, who had been in various other parties from time to time after leaving the Congress(I), have returned to its fold in the past two years. Among them are Mr. Nathu Ram Mirdha, Mr. Daulat Ram Saran and Mr. Jagdeep Dhankar, Ministers in the Janata Dal and SJP Governments at the Centre. Jats have both money and muscle power in the villages and the other castes, even if they want to, find it difficult to vote against the dictates of the members of this community.

However, the probable danger the Congress(I) may face from this kind of Jat consolidation is the ire of the rest of the people. If there is a backlash from other communities, the Congress(I) may suffer to some extent, but still the fact remains that the Jat votes can be decisive in as many as 70

seats. Along with the Jats the SCs, STs and the backwards are more inclined towards the Congress(I) though the third category and the Muslims cannot be taken for granted by the Congress(I) wherever the Janata Dal has a candidate with a winning chance.

The Congress(I), which had 51 seats in the dissolved Assembly was later joined by 11 former Janata Dal(D) MLAs and eight Janata Dal (Rajasthan) MLAs led by Mrs. Sumitra Singh. The party had come second in 130 seats in the 1990 elections when the BJP did likewise in 20 seats and the Janata Dal in 26 seats. In the remaining 24 seats Independents and other parties had stood second.

Theoretically the Congress(I) should win the coming elections in Rajasthan but there are too many if and buts in this assumption. The acute infighting in the party, going on between the PCC(I) group led by Mr. Paras Ram Maderna and the Hardeo Joshi group, may scale new heights by the time the nominations are filed. At present, the party leadership is in the process of scutinising the 3,200 odd applications. The 18-member Pradesh Election Committee, which will have an equal number of special invitees, is an indication of the shape of things in the party which is crippled by faction feuds. Left with no alternative, it appears the High Command will finally decide the names of the party candidates.

* Congress Said Gaining Ground in Rajasthan

94AS0067E Calcu ta THE TELEGRAPH in English 21 Oct 93 p 6

[Article by Rakesh Joshi: "Cong Finally Begins to Get Its Act Together in Rajasthan"]

[Text] Jaipur, Oct. 20—Having come out with a poll list in Rajasthan that has largely kept dissidence under a lid, the Congress appears to be finally getting its act together in the state.

In contrast, the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], contesting all 200 Assc··bly seats for the first time, appears to be uncertain about its ability to pull it off. This uncertainty comes out clearly in the former chief minister, Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat's terse assessment about his party's prospects. "A clear picture can only emerge after the last date of withdrawal of nominations (October 22) and once campaigning picks up," he said.

Janata Dal, the third party in the fray, is considered to be a non-starter. Despite recent spirited forays by Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav and Mr V.P. Singh, its presence in Rajasthan remains marginal owing to large-scale desertion in its ranks. The party, however, is planning to field over 150 candidates in alliance with the Left.

BJP Uncertain

The uncertainty gripping the BJP's rank and file is largely self-inflicted, having its roots in a statement of party strongman Sunder Singh Bhandari. Mr Bhandari said some months back that Mr Shekhawat would not be projected as the chief minister this time.

Though the central leadership sought to make up for the faux pas by enlisting Mr Shekhawat's services for the janadesh yatras, the damage had been done. Mr Shekhawat's yatra through Bharatpur and Alwar failed to attract the kind of crowds it could have.

Despite being a divided house, the Congress was quick to exploit the BJP's predicament. It organised a huge rally at Bharatpur to coincide with Mr Shekhawat's arrival. Further, the veteran Jat leader, Mr Nathu Ram Mirdha, was feted by over 70,000 farmers at Jaipur, for having completed 50 years in public life. Unsure of its crowd-pulling ability, the BJP did not organise a meeting at Jaipur to felicitate Mr Shekhawat. This showed up the party's much-vaunted organisational skills.

Faced with the task of fielding 200 candidates, the party found it difficult to patch a list together. The BJP decided to field some of its popular MPs, like Mrs Vasundhara Raje Scindia. The decision again sent wrong signals to the cadres.

The former state home minister, Mr Digvijay Singh, who led 11 Janata Dal(D) MLAs [Members of Legislative Assembly] into the Congress fold a few months back, said, "This signified the party's lack of faith in its own local aspirants."

Mr Singh, now the Congress candidate for Uniara in Tonk district, felt the BJP has been forced to a defensive position. "It has to contend with our onslaught and the demoralisation among its workers," he said.

However, BJP leaders think otherwise. The state leader, Mr Kailesh Meghwal, pointed out the BJP had to field known faces with proven vote-catching ability to ensure a good show. "These MPs won their Lok Sabha seats with large margins. Their victory in their own Assembly seats is assured and they will also contribute to party candidates in their areas of influence. This will increase our overall tally," he said.

Saffron Dissent

The show of defiance put up by dejected ticket seekers has also upset the BJP leadership. Many laid siege to the party office here on Sunday and Monday and Mr Shekhawat himself had to work out ways with the state election committee to contain this dissidence.

He explained this unprecedented dissidence with an unconvincing "where else can the party worker go to pour out his heart but to us?"

Party sources said that this dissent led to holding back the names of 49 candidates. Of the 151 names announced, 65 are sitting MLAs, 41 have been changed and 45 are being fielded for the first time.

State Congress United

The state Congress, on the other hand, has managed to strike a chord of unity, the list of candidates largely being welcomed in all districts except one. However, in Kota, the new-found bulwark of the minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office, Mr Bhuvanesh Chaturvedi, dejected ticket-seekers ransacked the party office yesterday.

This unity stems largely from the fact that the high command has accommodated all factional leaders, Central or state level. Even the squabbling in the district units—which saw parallel party committees emerge—have been controlled by accommodating rival claims.

Shekhawat Chargesheet

Congress leaders are hopeful of translating this headstart over the BJP into an incisive election campaign against the Shekhawat regime after the Dussehra festivities are over. The campaign will draw sustenance from the AICC's [All India Congress Committee] four-page chargesheet against the Shekhawat government released last month.

The former chief minister, Mr Heeralal Devpura, said, "To nail down a former policeman (Mr Shekhawat), one has to resort to police technique. That is why we have come up with a chargesheet which Mr Shekhawat has failed to respond to."

The chargesheet highlights the acts of omission and commission of the Shekhawat government, including the presence of eight ministers with known criminal records.

The publicity-shy but controversial son-in-law of Mr Shekhawat, Mr Narpat Singh Rajvi, felt the chargesheet could not do undo [as printed] the former chief minister's record of providing a clean administration. "Can the Congress claim that it has not fielded candidates with criminal records? Shekhawatjii has an appeal that transcends such trivial matters," he said.

Caste Equations

However, the evolving pattern of inter-case equations, more than the chargesheet, will determine the poll outcome. The Congress has chosen to decisively break the Jat-Rajput alliance that saw the BJP-Janata Dal combine sweep to power last election.

It has given primacy to Jat leaders like Mr Nathu Ram Mirdha, Mr Ram Miwas Mirdha, Mr Balram Jakhar and Mr Parsh Ram Maderna. The party has fielded Jat candidates in as many as 38 seats. Brahmins, who had drifted to the BJP in the last polls, have been fielded in as many as 23 seats. The two communities, which account for 24 per cent of the state's population, have been given 30 per cent of the seats.

Having replenished the Rajput component of its leadership by winning over Janata Dal(D) leaders like Mr Digvijay Singh, Mr Gulab Singh Shaktawat and Mr Khetsinh Rathod, the party has fielded 18 Rajput candidates.

Mr Harideo Joshi, who has been the Rajasthan chief minister thrice, felt that in the absence of a Ram wave, the Congress can effectively storm saffron bastions in the state. "In a level playing ground, the BJP should be surprised if it gets more than 60 seats," he said.

* 'Rebels' Claimed Hurting Congress in Rajasthan

94AS0068C Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 26 Oct 93 p 4

[First paragraph THE STATESMAN comment] txt
[Text] Jaipur, Oct. 23—Observers say that the presence of Congress(I) rebels in the election scene can cost the party dearly as it might benefit the BJP in the long run.

The presence of a large number of rebel party candidates in the election scene has upset the game plan of the Congress(I) in Rajasthan, according to reports from different parts of the State reaching the State capital. Nearly 50 rebel Congress(I) candidates, who were denied party tickets, are contesting the coming Assembly elections as independents. The presence of the rebel party candidates is posing a serious challenge to the official Congress(I) candidates.

The rebel Congress(I) candidates are contesting the election in Jaipur, Sri Ganganagar, Swaimadhopur, Dholpur and Kota districts. The Congress(I) leadership in Rajasthan has decided to deal firmly with the party rebels. The PCC(I) [Pradesh Congress Committee] president, Mr Paras Ram Maderna, is said to have instructed the district party chiefs to order expulsion of the party rebels to meet the crisis.

Political observers feel that the presence of the Congress(I) rebels in the election can cost the party dearly. The division of votes of the Congress(I) will directly benefit the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP], which certainly is in a better position, as the party rebels entering the election scene are concerned according to the information reaching here. There are about a dozen BJP rebels contesting the elections.

There is no denying the fact that there was resentment among the BJP activists and workers over the selection of a large number of candidates after the party high command released the first list of candidates by organizing a demonstration of the party headquarters at the Sardar Patel Marg here, compelling the party leadership to withhold the release of a second list of 49 candidates. Besides, the party leadership was also forced to change some names of candidates at the 11th hour.

But fortunately for the BJP, not many party rebels have decided to violate the party discipline and enter the electoral battle.

Similarly, the Janata Dal in Rajasthan, which is otherwise not very happy, is not facing the problem of party rebels entering the election scene. According to reports, like the BJP, there are about a dozen Janata Dal rebels also in the elections.

Janata Dal

* Janata Dal Seen Weak in Rajasthan

94AS0009B New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 28 Sep 93 p 2

[Article: "Not Much Interest in Janata Dal Election Tickets"]

[Text] Jaipur, 27 September—The election activities of the political parties have stabilized to an extent now. The flock of aspiring Congress (I) candidates have now left the capital and moved to the election districts. The crowd of the BJP ticket aspirers has also thinned now. Even in the Janata Dal factions, they are talking about issuing separate tickets among discussions about unity. The crowds from

the Congress (I) and BJP offices have moved toward the leaders' houses. The work of Janata Dal factions is moving very sluggishly.

The application process for Congress (I) has finished and the district committees are reviewing these applications. The district committees will send names of candidates to the sate election commission. The district committees are holding meetings these days. Therefore, the aspiring candidates are canvassing to these committees. The crowd of Congress (I) applicants for tickets is working hard to get names in the proposed panel. About 3,500 persons have applied to the state headquarters for the right to run from one of the 200 election seats.

Supervisors from the All India Janata Congress Committee are instructed to be present in the Congress (I) committee meetings. However, according to some Congress (I) sources, these supervisors have not arrived at their appointed places. Those who have shown up do not show much interest in the working of the party. In some districts, the local veteran leaders did not even pay any attention to these supervisors. These supervisors returned to Delhi because of this.

The Congress (I) workers had gathered here in a large number here until Friday. The Congress (I) ticket claimants even knocked at the doors of leaders' homes. Among the major leaders, the following were especially being courted for help and support: Former Chief Minister Haridev Joshi, Jagan Nath Pahadia, Nathu Ram Mirdha, state Congress (I) President Paras Ram Madrena, and Hira Lal Devpura. The practice of visiting the leaders begins early in the morning.

The crowd of Congress (I) aspirants will increase again after the election committee is formed. In addition to the aspiring candidates, their supporters will also gather here during the committee meetings. At present the Congress (I) members are just focused on how the committee is taking shape. The committee is expected to meet in the beginning of October. Even important leaders are trying to become the members of this committee. Important leaders are also visiting the state Congress (I) head office now.

Meanwhile in the offices of the main Congress (I) rival, the BJP, they have just started to accept applications for election tickets. The BJP extended application date to 29 September from the earlier deadline of 25 September. It has extended the date using the janadesh yatra [peoples mandate tours] being taken by its leaders. There was a large crowd at the BJP head office on Saturday, however, it dispersed when the announcement for extending the deadline for applications was made in the evening. On Monday, the BJP sources said that about 4,000 applications for tickets were received by then. The major BJP leaders have not applied for tickets yet. The major leaders will apply on the last day.

Former chief minister and BJP leader Bhairon Singh Shekhavat arrived here today after finishing his janadesh tour. According to BJP sources, the party will start its campaign vigorously now. The BJP election ticket aspirants are gathering around Mr. Shekhavat here. The second crowd attracter here is former Chief Minister Lalit Kishore Chaturvedi. People from distant places are gathering at the Rashtariya Sawyamsewak Sangh (RSS) head office in Bharati Bhawan. Because of the hope of RSS participating in the elections, the RSS leaders are also receiving visits from aspiring candidates. The RSS is also looking for possible candidates at its level.

The gathering at the BJP state president, Ram Das Aggarwal, is nominal. Most of the aspiring candidates believe that Mr. Aggarwal does not have much say in awarding ticket. Mr. Shekhavat, Mr. Chaturvedi, and RSS people will have more clout in giving tickets. Therefore, the crowd of ticket aspirants is very thin around Mr. Aggarwal. The state BJP election committee will meet here on Tuesday and Wednesday. Sunder Singh Bhandhari, the national vice president of the party, will be present at this meeting. The BJP sources revealed that the ticket aspirants are focusing on Mr. Bhandari now. Many leaders are working hard to reach him.

Compared to the BJP and Congress (I) election preparations, the Janata Dal factions appear to be moving very slowly. After the talks about unity among these factions, they are pretty upset with each other. The Janata Dal and Janata Dal (A) both have started applications for issuing tickets here, however, not many people have shown interest for their tickets yet. If all the Janata Dal factions and left-wing parties run as a coalition then a third political power will emerge here. If it happens, then the election rivalry, which appears to be straight now, will become three-sided.

* Janata Dal Prospects in Rajasthan Seen Brightening

94AS0046B Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 11 Oct 93 p 10

[Text] Jaipur, Oct 9—The Rajasthan unit of the Janata Dal, after the reunifications of its three factions is trying hard to emerge as a third force in the coming Assembly elections in the State.

In the last Assembly elections, held in 1990, the party had won 55 out of the 200 seats, but then the situation was entirely different since the Janata Dal had formed an alliance with the BJP and both parties jointly fought the Congress(I). The Congress(I) was routed in the 1990 elections, winning only 50 seats.

But this time, the scenario has totally changed. The Janata Dal is fighting both the Congress(I) and the BJP. There is no denying the fact that during the past two years the party has lost its sheen.

Outlook

* Delhi Election Said Hard to Call

94AS0008E New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 27 Sep 93 p 3

[Article: "Hard to Fathom New Delhi's Mood"]

[Text] New Delhi 26 September—New Delhi is the capital of India. Therefore the results of this seat should reflect the mood of the whole nation. However, this did not happen. Except for some waves, this seat showed a different mood. Literacy is also higher here than the other Delhi election districts. This is the smallest legislative seat (district) from among the seven Delhi districts. Just like other districts, this district also had eight city corporation seats. After the 1991 census, it got five vidhan sabha seats. in other words, these seats will be more important than the corporation seats. Here are some description of these five seats.

1. Sarojini Nagar: This seat was formed by joining most of the areas from the corporation seats of Laxmibai Nagar and Sarojini Nagar. Government residential colonies occupy most of this district. Government employees from the high ranking administrators to the fourth class employees have the power to change the vote in this district. Lodhi Colony is on one side of it and on the other side is Ansari Nagar with J.J. Colony behind it. The large houses of diplomats in Jor Bagh are also in this district as are the businessmen's fancy houses in B.K. Dutt Colony.

According to the 1991 census, 12.94 percent of the voters here belong to scheduled castes. This district is considered as government employee majority district, however, J.J. colonies settled behind Ansari Nagar, Laxmibai Nagar, and Netaji Nagar have changed the population profile here to an extent.

Voter turn out in this district has always been low. Those who live in fancy houses and run the government machinery participate very little in the democratic process. Since government employees are frequently transferred, names of a large number of residents here are not in the voter lists. If the elections are held during the vacations, a large number of these people are out of town enjoying rest and recreation. We cannot say that a specific group or community has the control over this district. Still, people from Punjab, South India, and Uttar Khand live in large numbers here. The [wining] political party in Laxmibai Nagar has changed each time. However, Sarojini Nagar has been in the control of the BJP. In the 1992 election, the BJP was beaten badly in both districts.

2. Gol Market: In the past the Gol Market seat for the corporation was reserved. Now it has been made general. Some part of Barakhamba corporation seat also has been added to it. Government employees live in large numbers in the old Gol Market district. In Barakhamba area, the population is pretty homogeneous. In this district spread between Zakir Hussein Road and Sardar Patel Marg, there is a large number of J.J. Colony people in addition to the government employees.

Mid-level government employees live around Bangla Sahib Road, Baba Kharag Singh Marg, Mandir Marg, and Peshwa Road. High-level government officers live around Ashok Road, Rajendar Prasad Road, and Zakir Hussein Road. The legislators living on North Avenue are also voters in this district as are the ministers living on Aurangzeb Road, Parithvi Raj Road, Safaddarjang Road, and Akbar Road. The prime minister also votes in this district. The scheduled caste people make up 22.41 percent of this district's population. The Congress Party has been winning from here except for in 1977. Rajesh Khanna has won from here in the 1992 election.

3. Minto Road: This district spread between Ansari Road to Ashram via Nizammudin and Sikandra Road to Thompson Road is the only district in New Delhi where Muslim voters live in a large number. There are about 20,000 voters in J.J. Colonies. There is a large number of government employees on Minto Road, however, the diplomats and the rich businessmen in Sunder Nagar give some glitter to this district.

On the other end, the people surrounded by uncertainties living in J.J. Colonies are also the voters of this district. There is a large number of Muslims among these. These Muslims have come from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Bangladesh. The Muslims settled earlier in Nizammudin and Sarai Kale Khan are also voters of this district. However, it is surprising that the portion of scheduled caste voters is 18.13 in this district. Equally surprising is the fact that the BJP had won here in 1972 during the "Indira wave." It won again in 1977. It lost here in all other elections. In 1992, Shatrughan Sinha had lost here by 9,000 votes.

4. Kastrurba Nagar: Lajpat Nagar, known as the stronghold of a special interest group, is a part of this district. If we go a little westward, we will be in the government employees colonies of Andrews Ganj and Sewa Nagar, followed by the affluent South Extension business section, and Pinjali village to a bit north. All these are part of this district. The Amar Colony section of Lajpat Nagar, where the number of Punjabi refugees is so great that they can change election results, is also included in this district. Sewa Nagar has mostly votes of people from hilly regions. These people mostly work in fourth grade [peon] government jobs. However, rich businessmen and retired military officers live in Defense Colony. The scheduled cast votes make up 14 percent of the total votes in this district. The BJP has always won in this district except for in 1972. It has never lost the Amar Colony corporation seat here. However, in 1992, Rajesh Khanna took advantage of his being a Punjabi.

5. Jangpura: This district was known as Lajpat Nagar in the past. Now, one corporation seat of Lajpat Nagar, as well as that of Bhogal, has been included in this district. The Sikh voters prove to be the determining factor in Bhogal. The Muslim "pocket" here has become smaller now. This seat starting from Lajpat Nagar to Lodi Colony to Lodi Estate, and is spread to Kilokari village. The L, I, and G flats of Sunlight Colony, Nigam Colony of Jal Vihar, and DESU Colony of Kilokari are all part of this seat. The government employees living in the railways colonies of Bhogal and Lajpat Nagar are also part of this seat. At the same time, the large number of the poor living in Rajiv

Gandhi Nagar J.J. Camp around Nehru Stadium is also part of this district. The scheduled caste voters make up 16.27 percent of the voters here. There is a mixed population in Ashram settled on Mathura Road. There is large number of Sikhs in Siddharath Extension behind it. All in all, the Punjabis control this district. Here too, the BJP had won except for in 1972. However, in 1992, Rajesh Khanna won by 3,000 votes.

* BJP, Congress Battle for Delhi Assembly Viewed

94AS0046G Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 1 Oct 93 p 14

[Text] New Delhi—With the count-down begun for the Delhi assembly elections scheduled November 6 as per the announcement of the election commission, the two traditional rivals, the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party, are all set for a confrontation.

The Janata Dal and its allies, however, may have a few surprises during the polls this time even though going purely by past experience the Congress and the BJP have been the front runners always.

This time too most of the contests would be essentially between the two rivals who have a large organizational network in the capital.

The Congress and the BJP have both witnessed faction fights in the last several months but with elections around the corner, the established leadership in these organizations may once again be called to give direction to the rank and file.

However, while in the BJP, the differences between O.P. Kohli, local party chief, and Madan Lal Khurana, the South Delhi M.P. and all-India secretary, may be buried for the time being, the same may not be true of the Congress. The on-going feud between the DPCC president H.K.L. Bhagat, and the CWC member, R.K. Dhawan, may jeopardize the chances of some candidates unless the high command comes down with a heavy hand.

According to the popular perception in political circles, Bhagat and Khurana will respectively lead the Congress and BJP. In addition, Sajjan Kumar for the Congress and Dr. Vijya Kumar Malhotra for the BJP may play very crucial roles. As per available indications, Khurana may contest the assembly poll and will be projected as the chief minister in case the BJP is voted to power.

In respect of the Congress, it is not clear who would be the nominee for the chief ministership though Bhagat and Sajjan Kumar will have a major say whenever the final decision is taken.

The two parties have already started trading charges. Bhagat in a frontal attack on the BJP has called it a symbol of "vinaash" (destruction) while proclaiming that his party stood for "vikas" (development). He feels that the Congress was the only party which talked about development. Both the BJP and the Janata Dal dealt mostly with emotive and divisive issues. Therefore, the people of Delhi would reject both of them.

Khurana accuses the Congress of betrayal. He points out that since February 1983, when the last polls in Delhi were held, the situation had gone from bad to worse. The Congress was singularly responsible for it. It has failed to appreciate the ground-level realities. Bhagat and his friends cannot absolve themselves from the blame on account of rising prices, a collapse of civic amenities and the deteriorating law and order situation.

Bhagat says that contrary to the belief held in several quarters, Delhi was not a city of the elite but of the weaker sections of society. It is a mini India and Delhiites were conscious that the Congress alone was capable of providing a strong government at the Center, as well as in the Union territory.

* Muslim Backward Caste Votes Seen Crucial in Delhi Elections

94AS0047B Calcutta THE TELEGRAPH in English 6 Oct 93 p 5

[Article by Seema Paul]

[Text] New Delhi, Oct. 5—The contest for power in the capital is always keen but the battle for Delhi this time will be more zealously fought as the process will throw up an Assembly after a gap of over four decades and give the winning party the honours of selecting a chief minister and a seven-member Cabinet.

Old rivals Congress(I) and BJP will once again fight it out in Delhi with the Janata Dal playing the role of keeping the Congress(I) on tenterhooks by threatening its traditional votebanks. That gives the BJP a definite advantage but much would depend also on the election campaign of the three parties which is expected to get underway next week.

Political circles are currently agog with curiosity about who the BJP and Congress(I) will project as their candidates for chief ministership. Delhi strongman and Pradesh Congress Committee president, Mr H.K.L. Bhagat, could well make a bid for the post, especially as he was left in the cold after losing the parliamentary elections in 1991.

But there are strong rumblings of protest against Mr Bhagat. They come mainly from the Delhi Congress camp represented by Mr R.K. Dhawan and Mr Rajesh Khanna, both of whom had been organising impressive rallies in Delhi long before the elections were announced. Some of these were held in East Delhi and Outer Delhi, which are bastions of Mr Bhagat and his supporter Mr Sajjan Kumar, MP, respectively.

Before the elections were announced, the two groups were divided in their opinion over whether elections should be held in Delhi along with the four other states and had even come to blows in presence of the Prime Minister, Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao, who had to walk out.

More recently, the Bhagat camp had to cut a sorry figure at a workers meeting called by him, where the turnout, though good in terms of numbers, left everybody unimpressed as the participants seemed to be jhuggi jhonpri dwellers who had been ferried in trucks rather than genuine party workers.

But to offset the divisions within the Congress, the BJP also is a house divided. Among those who were said to be keen on chief ministership are Mr Madan Lal Khurana, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra, Mr Kedar Nath Sawhney and Delhi Pradesh BJP chief, Mr O.P. Kohli.

Political observers feel four factors could prove instrumental in deciding the fortunes of the political parties in Delhi—the Sikh, Muslim, backward and Harijan vote. These votebanks traditionally voted in favour of Congress but have turned against it in recent years in the wake of the Mandal-Mandir politics. The Sikhs, on the other hand, turned away from the Congress after the anti-Sikh riots in 1982.

"The Congress," a Congress observer of long standing said, "could become a winning party in Delhi in only two scenarios. Either the Janata Dal and Bahujan Samaj Party, which has a base among Harijans, stay out of the fray and ask their supporters to vote for Congress in the interest of achieving their larger goal of defeating the BJP.

"But this is already ruled out and the only option for the Congress is to conduct an aggressive campaign wherein it can win back these important votebanks by convincing them that it was more important to defeat the BJP than fritter away their votebank by voting a losing Janata Dal and BSP," the observer said.

The recent meeting of Congress workers called by Mr Bhagat to kick off the party campaign saw the coming together of Mr Sajjan Kumar and Mr Jagdish Tytler, along with him. This marked the burial of a long hatchet between Mr Bhagat and Mr Tytler and could have augured well for the Congress but no sooner had it happened, that it set off a reaction among Sikhs, who could tilt the fortunes in at least 10 Assembly constituencies.

A large group of Sikhs defied a police ban to march in the capital to demand registration of police cases against Mr Sajjan Kumar and Mr Bhagat. More significant was the move by the Badal and Longowal factions of Akali Dal to seek a poll understanding with the BJP and a desire to contest the election under the BJP symbol.

Congress advocates, however, insist that the party could undo some of the damage this may cause by wooing the Punjabi Hindus by reminding them that Akali leaders had sheltered terrorists in Punjab. Sikh votes could tilt the balance in at least 10 of the 67 constituencies in Delhi. The backward vote would play a significant role in constituencies under East, Outer and New Delhi parliamentary constituencies.

The main reason for the defeat of Mr H.K.L. Bhagat at the hands of Mr B.L. Sharma "Prem" in the East Delhi parliamentary constituency in 1991 was that the Janata Dal contender, Mr Ram Vir Singh Bidhuri and the BSP candidate took away a huge chunk of backward and Harijan votes. If the backward communities decide to vote for the Janata Dal, the BJP would be a definite gainer and the struggle for power for the Congress will become more difficult.

Interestingly, in the New Delhi constituency, the BJP leader, Mr L.K. Advani, would have lost to greenhorn Rajesh Khanna in 1991 were it not for the votes Mrs Manju Mohun, weaned away from the Congress.

The Muslim vote could be decisive in at least 10 constituencies but a big question mark hangs over whether they will vote en bloc for the Congress or get divided between the Janata Dal and Congress.

Janata Dal leaders are confident that it will go their way and are making the tall claim that they could make a go in at least 30 of the 67 Delhi constituencies by bringing together Harijahs and Muslims in their favour. The Janata Dal campaign will, however, suffer from the absence of Mr V.P. Singh, who has pledged not to come to Delhi until he is vindicated.

The Bihar chief minister, Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav, and Mr Ram Vilas Paswan, who represents Harijans have opened the campaign for the party, the former by addressing a well-attended rally and the latter by courting arrest in protest against the demolition of Dr Ambedkar's statue in Alwar.

BJP

* Akali Dal Calls for Support of BJP in Elections

94AS0061E Bombay THE TIMES OF INDIA in English 18 Oct 93 p 7

[Text] Chandigarh, Oct. 17 (UNI)—The Akali Dal (Panthic) chief, Mr Amarinder Singh, today appealed to all the Akali factions to support Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the coming "mini general elections" to give a crushing defeat to the Congress.

"Our (Akalis) primary common objective is to defeat the Congress and that can not be achieved unless we support the BJP," he told newsmen here today.

The Akali leader said though the Akali Dal (Badal) chief, Mr Parkash Singh Badal, had said that his party would support BJP in Delhi, Mr Badal should clarify the stand of his party in other states.

Justifying his stand, Mr Amarinder Singh said the BJP victory in five states would not only necessitate Lok Sabha mid-term polls but would also help in evolving two party system in the country.

"If the Congress is defeated, I am certain Lok Sabha mid-term polls will be positively held in next summer," he said adding that the present trends clearly indicated that the BJP would form the government at the Centre.

Besides the BJP and the Akalis had similar policies of not separating religion from politics he said.

*** Akali Dal (B) Said Campaigning for BJP in Delhi**

94AS0067C Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 20 Oct 83 p 6

[Text] New Delhi, Oct 19—In a significant development, the Akali Dal (Badal) today announced that it would campaign for the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] in all the five states including Delhi for the forthcoming elections, and the party president, Mr Prakash Singh Badal, will address joint rallies with BJP leaders in Delhi from October 21 to November 5.

The Sikh voters can tilt the balance in at least 15 of the 70 constituencies in Delhi, but their influence in Uttar Pradesh is limited to four to five Assembly constituencies in the Terai region and in Rajasthan to Ganganagar area. Mrs Maneka Gandhi had won the Pilibhit parliamentary constituency in the Terai region in 1989 on the Janata Dal ticket, mainly due to Sikhs voting en bloc in her favour.

The announcement created ripples in political circles in Delhi but Congress(I) observers said this may consolidate the Punjabi Hindu voters in their favour, as Mr Badal's image is tainted by his alleged links with terrorists.

Explaining their reasons for supporting the BJP, the Delhi state Akali Dal (Badal) president, Mr Avtar Singh Hit, said the Congress(I) had not yet done anything to punish those guilty for the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

"Instead, Mr H.K.L. Bhagat, Mr Sajjan Kumar and Mr Jagdish Tytler, the main accused of the 1984 riots, continue to be supreme leaders of the Congress(I) in Delhi," he said.

The BJP, on the other hand, has not only given a categorical assurance to Mr Badal that if it is voted to power in Delhi those guilty for the 1984 riots will be punished but also included this promise in its manifesto. The BJP has also promised to give Punjabi the same status as Urdu and introduce a Punjabi news bulletin on Doordarshan.

All these had been specifically demanded by Mr Badal at a meeting he had with the BJP president, Mr Lal Krishna Advani, early this month. A decision on seat adjustment with Akali Dal (Badal) could not, however, be reached as Mr Advani wanted the Akali Dal(B) candidates to contest elections on the lotus symbol.

Later, the Akali Dal(B) decided not to contest elections and put up its candidates but to support the BJP from outside. Significantly, as soon as the dates for Delhi elections were announced, representatives of the Akali Dal(B) organised a relay hunger strike at Jantar Mantar lawns to demand action against the guilty of 1984 riots. Widows and orphans of the riots are participating in the hunger strike, which is still continuing.

On Friday, Mr Badal will lead a delegation of riot victims to the home minister's office where a memorandum demanding action against the guilty will be presented to him. After five days wait, the Akali Dal(Badal) will mount a big anti-Congress campaign by taking the orphans and widows in a jeep from place to place in Delhi and asking Sikhs not to vote for the Congress(I). Effigies of Congress(I) leaders Mr Bhagat, Mr Tytler and Mr Kumar will also be mounted in the jeep.

It is still early to predict if these efforts will succeed in helping the BJP to get a major chunk of the Sikh votes in Delhi. But one thing is quite clear. Sikhs, who form nearly seven per cent of Delhi's population, are not going to vote for the Congress(I).

Interestingly, the BJP has given ticket to only two Sikh candidates in Delhi, while the Congress(I) has put up at least half a dozen Sikh candidates. In addition, the Akali Dal (Manjit) has put up candidates in at least 30 constituencies in Delhi and the Janata Dal continues to woo Sikh voters in a big way. All these factors could help the Congress(I) by dividing the Sikh voters, but the full picture would only become clearer in the coming days.

*** Sikh Community Seen Rallying Behind BJP in Delhi**

94AS0068B Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 27 Oct 93 p 6

[Excerpt] Oct 26—The character of the South Delhi Parliamentary constituency has changed substantially with the addition of the three West Delhi segments of Hari Nagar, Tilak Nagar and Rajouri Garden after the delimitation. These areas are dominated by Punjabis and resettled backward classes.

Punjabis are concentrated in Janakpuri, Tilak Nagar and Hari Nagar. While most of the 1984 anti-Sikh riot victims have been settled in Tilak Nagar, Janakpuri and Rajouri Garden have large numbers of rehabilitated backward class voters apart from middle-class traders and Government servants.

Chittaranjan Park in the Kalkaji constituency has a large population of displaced Bengalis from Bangladesh.

They strive to maintain a distinct cultural identity. The issues of utmost importance relate to lack of relief to victims of the 1984 riots and reservation for backward classes. The 1984 massacre, following the assassination of Indira Gandhi, was a traumatic experience for the Sikh community as it destroyed more than a thousand households. Despite numerous representations, demonstration and rallies by the affected families, and appointment of various commissions of inquiry, the Government has failed to take any action.

Keeping this in mind, the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] is taking up the issue in a big way. It has promised to bring to book every person responsible for the tragedy. The party has also promised to accord Punjabi the status of a second language and telecast news bulletins in this language through the official media. That Sikhs are completely alienated from the Congress is a major advantage for the BJP.

The Congress, on the other hand, is apologetic in its approach. The obvious handicap is the alleged involvement of three important party leaders of the capital, Mr H.K.L. Bhagat, Mr Jagdish Tytler and Mr Sajjan Kumar

in the riots. Mr Bhagat, the DPCC(I) [expansion not given] president, has little to offer to the community. He took a somewhat strange stand when he promised that no guilty person would be sheltered if his party forms the Government.

This, clearly, will not cut much ice. The Congress has been in power at the Centre for the major part of the last decade and has done little for the victims. [passage omitted]

Congress (I)

* Delhi (I) Congress Workers Said Shocked Over Election

94AS0008D New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 23 Sep 93 p 1

[Article By Sumit Mishar: "Delhi Congress (I) Workers Shocked Over Election"]

[Text] New Delhi 22 September—The vidhan sabha election announced last evening are equivalent to a sudden crisis for Delhi's Congress workers. When T.N. Sheshan, the election commissioner, described the details of election plans, the Congress workers held their heads in deep thoughts. Since they have not formed any groups, they have very little hope to forming a government in Delhi. Most of the Congressites believe that if their inner factionalism is reduced and they have some time for preparation, they might be better off. However, they are openly claiming to be fully ready for the elections.

Election preparation activities started in the Congress camp this morning. The aspiring candidates began to visit their local legislators to explain about their power and popularity. The opponents of state Congress President Harikishan Lal Bhagat held a meeting, and later went to visit Naval Kishore Sharma, national general secretary of the party and acting president of Delhi Congress, at his home to show their strength. From there, these leaders went to the prime minister's political advisor Jitendar Prasad's home. The leaders who are aspiring for election tickets continued to visit office of Uttar Pradesh Congress all day long. Harikishan Lal Bhagat told the reporters in a press conference there that the Congress hopes to win the elections.

The factionalism in the state Congress did not appear to decrease even after the announcement about election. The only difference was that the discontented members, who wanted Harikishan Lal be removed from presidency, are now asking the high command not to allow the state election commission to deal with the election and to appoint a separate panel to issue election tickets. About 50 unhappy leaders visited Navalkishore and Jitendar Prasad at their homes for this reason. One purpose for these visits was to show their strength. Since Jitendar Prasad was out of Delhi, these leaders could express their dissatisfaction only to Navalkishore. Mr. Sharma assured these leaders that he will pass their ideas to the higher officials and told them that he will make sure they do not get an unfair deal.

These leaders gathered at R.K. Dhawan's home at six in the evening. In this one and half hour meeting, they decided that all these leaders will visit the prime minister to tell him their side of the story. Since announcement to hold election was already made, it was decided that they will take part in the election with great zeal. After the meeting, Mr. R.K. Dhawan told all the leaders to visit Navalkishore and Jitendar Prasad at their homes. Legislators Rajesh Khanna and Jagdish Titler did not attend this meeting or they were not invited. About 50 leaders including Jai Prakash Aggarwal, Chowdhery Fateh Singh, Karishan Tirath, Bhauri Lal Shashtri, Shiv Charan Gupta, Sushil Sharma, Har Charan Singh Josh, Inder Singh Solanki, Kuldip Singh gujral, Anjana Kanwar, and Ramnath Chandelia.

Many veteran leaders believe that the Congress (I) will be hurt badly because of the present situation in this election. Among the reasons for this is the proposed increase in electricity rates in addition to groupism within the party. Some leaders said that the Congress (I) was very weak in some areas. South Delhi is prominent among them. The leaders also differed on the election manifesto. Mr. Bhagat formed a committee to prepare the manifesto, but Mr. Dhawan's group does not even recognize this committee. Another legislator, who considers himself separate from both these groups, talked about following the orders of the party high command.

The aspiring candidates will begin to receive application forms from tomorrow. Harikishan Bhagat made this announcement today. The Dhawan group leaders did not want to go with Mr. Bhagat even on this decision. They suspect that Bhagat will not send the names of those in the opposing camp. Therefore, this group will send their names to the central parliamentary board of the party itself.

Soon after the election announcement, aspiring candidates began to visit the three party legislators for tickets. Three local election ticket aspirers loaded their supporters in about ten Tempo trucks and visited local legislator Rajesh Khanna at his home. With the drum beats and slogans these local leaders formed a long line of their supporters to show their strength to Rajesh Khanna. Such leaders also continued to visit the state Congress office.

* Municipal Commissioner Said Scheming for Congress Victory in Delhi

94AS0061H Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 19 Oct 93 p 7

[Text] New Delhi, Oct. 18—The Municipal Commissioner of Delhi [MCD], Mr Virendra Singh, seems to have suddenly decided to improve living conditions in the outer Delhi and Sadar Bazar areas of the capital.

Significantly, these are the parliamentary segments of the two Congress(I) M.P.s, Mr Sajjan Kumar and Mr Jagdish Tytler. Almost every other day a new and "ambitious" scheme is announced and coming as it does after the Delhi poll notification on September 21, questions are bound to arise.

It is being alleged that Mr Virendra Singh is returning a favour to Mr Sajjan Kumar, sitting Congress(I) M.P. from outer Delhi, and Mr Jagdish Tytler, Minister of State for Surface Transport. They had enabled Mr Singh to succeed Mr P.V. Jaikrishnan as MCD chief, bypassing the claims of some of his seniors.

Both Mr Sajjan Kumar and Mr Tytler have high stakes in the Assembly elections. While Mr Sajjan Kumar is expecting to become the Chief Minister, if his party wins, Mr Tytler has to ensure the victory of his nominees.

Official records show that Mr Singh woke up to the civic problems of the city areas concerned only after the announcements for polls were made on September 21. Numerous missives were sent to newspaper offices and they carried information about some project or the other, launched by Mr Singh, to improve civic conditions in selected areas.

One such example is the launching of an "ambitious scheme" for the construction of a reservoir in Mehrauli, which lies in the outer Delhi parliamentary segment. The project is expected to cost Rs 8.75 lakhs and is to be completed within six months.

The first announcement was made on September 24, three days after the polls were announced. This was for a project to provide "basic civic amenities" to slum-dwellers of Shahbad-Daulatpur (outer Delhi). It is expected to cost Rs. 3.6 crore.

Two days later, the Commissioner followed it up with another scheme for "widening and improvement of the Najafgarh Road"—the stretch from Raja Garden to Tilak Nagar.

On September 28, the Commissioner visited Ramesh Nagar and the surrounding colonies with Mr Tytler to inspect civic conditions. The area falls under the Sadar Bazar parliamentary segment represented by the Minister. The official communique said: "He (Mr. Singh) also issued on-the-spot instructions to the officials of the Delhi Water Supply and Sewage Disposal Undertaking to carry out essential modifications in the distribution system so that water pressure could be increased (in the area)."

Next came the announcement (on October 1) that MCD would rehabilitate illegal squatters on public land by providing them with shelters in Rohini, Dwarka, Narela and Bawana (part of the outer Delhi segment) at a cost of Rs 27.97 crore.

Other Parties

* Seat Adjustments Between Janata Dal, CPM in Delhi Said to Fail

94AS0062E Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 19 Oct 93 p 7

[Text] New Delhi, Oct. 18—Attempts at seat adjustment between Left parties and the Janata Dal in Delhi appear to have broken down completely.

Admitting this officially here today, CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] leaders criticised the Dal's intransigent stand on seat-sharing and stressed the party's complete lack of response.

"There is an urgent necessity for a combined fight against the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] and the Congress, and we reiterate our appeal to the Janata Dal and its ranks to see this," the CPI(M) leader, Mr Jogendra Sharma, said. The CPI [Communist Party of India] and the CPI(M) are to jointly contest 17 seats in the Delhi polls.

Today's developments have raised doubts about the West Bengal chief minister, Mr Jyoti Basu's arrival here to campaign for both the Janata Dal and the Left parties.

According to the Janata Dal MP, Mr Chandrajit Yadav, Mr Basu had reacted favourably to a letter two days ago requesting his participation in the poll campaign, specifically in Delhi. The two Dal chief ministers, Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav and Mr Biju Patnaik, are also expected to join in the campaign.

Meanwhile, the national council of the CPI, chaired by Mr Chaturanan Mishra, today discussed political developments and the party's electoral strategy in Delhi.

Dal leaders, however, seem to be attempting to paper over the differences with the Left parties. "We have planned a joint campaign in other states, as well as in Delhi. There will be a 'friendly contest' in those seats where the Left parties are contesting on their own," said a leader.

However, a senior Dal leader from Delhi admitted in private that "There was such an incredible rush even among the Janata Dal(B) and later, the Ajit faction, for tickets that we faced tremendous difficulty in smoothing over ruffled feathers in the party even without considering the Left." "The Left parties do not have such a strong presence in Delhi," he added.

Recently, Mr Ajit Singh said, "We hope that our differences with the Left parties will be sorted out soon." In fact, nearly a 1,000 Dal contenders withdrew their names here today in favour of the official candidates.

Significantly, in the rest of the constituencies, Left campaigners are only expected to appeal to voters to elect candidates committed to secularism and democracy. The appeal will not particularly garner support for the Janata Dal candidates contesting all 70 seats in Delhi.

The senior party leader, Mr N.N. Manna, said that their campaign would highlight civic amenities and law and order, unemployment and anti-labour policies. "The campaign will also expose the full support given by the BJP to the Congress' anti-people new economic policies," a Left leader said.

Despite announcing a joint poll campaign involving senior Left leaders like Mr Basu, the Dal will have its own 31-member campaign committee headed by Mr Viresh Pratap Choudhury, president of the Delhi unit. This panel will finalise the strategy for the election campaign. The former minister, Mr Kursheed Ahmed, is to liaison between the Delhi unit and the national campaign committee.

Outlook

* Congress, BJP Battle in Himachal Seen Intense

94AS0045C Cochin THE WEEK in English 5 Sep 93 p 37

[Article by Vijaya Pushkarna: "Head on Battle"]

[Text] The heat generated by the demolition of the Babri Masjid in distant Ayodhya may not matter much in Himachal Pradesh, but that is no cause for cheer to the Congress. The party knows well that it takes very little to lose a lot. The Congress under the leadership of Virbhadra Singh had 58 out of 68 seats in the assembly till the polls in early 1990. A minuscule 1.3 per cent voters swung the BJP way, and the Congress lost all but nine seats.

While this time the BJP is determined to cash in on the Ram temple issue, the Congress is going all out to highlight what it calls the "non-performance and failure of the BJP government on all fronts." When it comes to the crunch, people will be more concerned with the development works that ground to a halt during the BJP rule, is the Congress rationale.

The PCC office on the fashionable Mall in Shimla has a number of visitors daily who seek redress of local problems. "The BJP made a number of false promises during the last elections. It promised a job to every family and rice at Rs 2.50 a kilo. But who got them? Apple and orange growers, who were promised enhanced support prices, found them abolished altogether. In a single stroke 35,000 people were retrenched. People are angry and disenchanted with the BJP. So we do not have much to do to win," says Congress president Virbhadra Singh.

But Virbhadra Singh's confidence ends with the BJP. Matters are not so easy for him within the Congress. He faces a rival power centre in Union Communications Minister Sukh Ram, who makes frequent trips to the state and holds meetings about which the PCC president learns through the papers the next day. Sukh Ram has only Vidya Stokes and a few other leaders attending his meetings, but the small size of the group has not made Virbhadra Singh breathe easier. He is pragmatic when it comes to the leadership issue. "In the democratic process, you can't fight a battle without a clear line of command, no more than you can fight a battle without a general or commander," he says. He has asked Narasimha Rao to "state in unambiguous terms" the name of the commander so that the party workers and voters will be cleared of all doubts.

The scene is diametrically opposite in the BJP. A number of leaders feel that it would be best to desist from projecting anyone as the future chief minister. Former chief minister Shanta Kumar is at a disadvantage from the harsh decisions he had taken, such as abolition of 1,000 government posts, enforcement of the 'no work, no pay' norm and the hike in diagnosis charges in government hospitals.

Many of his ministerial colleagues accuse him of not abiding by cabinet decisions. Says Radha Raman Shastri, former education minister: "There is no harm in projecting anyone as the chief minister. And that includes Shanta Kumar. But that should be done only if there is a consensus among the party candidates."

The BJP won 46 seats in the 1990 polls, and two members from the Janata Dal joined it when the assembly was dissolved. The rest of the nine Janata Dal MLAs have gone their independent ways making the party inconsequential now. The BJP is clear about the issues it will highlight. "Royalty for Himachal's power," will be its war cry.

At current prices, the state could earn Rs 900 crore a year as royalty, which would make it self-sufficient. But actually, the projected income of Rs 299 crore for 1993-94 is barely enough to square off annual loan and interest repayments. To clear its annual wage bill of Rs 850 crore and developmental bills of Rs 400 crore, the state has to look towards the Centre.

The Congress has usually harped on this and the smooth relationship it enjoyed with governments at the Centre to ensure votes. But the BJP is not going to allow that line to appeal this time. Its cadre is charged up for a head-on battle.

* Effect of Beant Singh's Visit to Himachal Pradesh Viewed

94AS0059B New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 14 Oct 93 p 2

[Article by Vivek Saxsena: "Who Will Benefit From the Propaganda Spread by Beant Singh on His Himachal Trip?"]

[Text] New Delhi, 13 October. Both the Congress (I) and BJP leaders in Himachal Pradesh believe that they will benefit if Punjab's Chief Minister Beant Singh participates in election propaganda. Both parties will stay quiet over the issue of no work not pay' during the vidhan sabha election.

Chief Minister Beant Singh is highly in demand for election promotion. Last month, when Harash Mahajan, president of the state Youth Congress Party, had gathered all Congress (I) leaders in Kullu, the chief attractions at that rally were Chief Minister Beant Singh and Maninderjit Singh Batta, president of the Youth Congress. According to the state Congress (I) President Vir Bhaddar Singh, Beant Singh is in great demand in this state. He will positively influence the people if he is involved in election promotion because he was successful in controlling terrorism.

Meanwhile, the BJP also believes that an election tour by Beant Singh will help move the voters toward it. According to Professor Prem Kumar Dhumal, president of the state BJP, it does not matter what kind of image Beant Singh has in the whole nation because the Himachal voters are allergic to him. The reason for this is that Beant Singh says one thing in Himachal Pradesh and very different things in other places. The people of Himachal are especially angry at him because of the Greater Punjab affair he has started. He supports the idea of merging Himachal, Punjab, and Haryana and forming a Greater Punjab. The people of Himachal with affinity to their identity dislike this idea.

The second important issue is no work no pay. It should be known that Shanta Kumar's government had refused to pay salaries to the striking workers while they were out on strike. This had made the government employees very angry at the BJP government. The BJP was totally wiped out in the Shimla municipal election. According the state BJP president, this just cannot be an election issue, because the Bhajan Lal government in Haryana had declared a one-day strike by its employees as a break in service. Their salaries for the whole month was stopped. This shows that the "elephant has two sets of teeth: one set for chewing and the other for showing off."

Central Communications Minister Sukh Ram avoids discussing this issue. According to him the party does not lack issues. It will make development and corruption the main issues. However, the opinion of his party and that of Vir Bhaddar Singh is very different. According to Mr. Singh, the BJP tries to cash in every issue, and this time they will not let it succeed in this effort.

"I believe that the government employees were not angry at the no work no pay' decision. They were angry at Shanta Kumar government's oppressive actions. They had acted in retaliation. This was not a decision that the BJP can take credit for. Our Congress governments have made such decisions all the time. The only difference was that we did not invent the no work no pay' slogan. After the strikes, vacations and holidays were used to adjust the time lost. If there was not holidays available, the time lost in the strike was adjusted during the next year. What is new in this practice?" Asks Vir Bhaddar Singh.

* Local Issues Said To Dominate in Himachal

94AS0061G Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 19 Oct 93 p 7

[Text] Shimla, Oct 17—Local issues will once again dominate the poll scene in Himachal Pradesh where polls are scheduled to be held in about three weeks.

The State had been swept by a pro-BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] wave in the last elections giving the party a clear majority with 44 seats. However, this time there has been no discernible wave in favour of either party, especially with President's rule lessening the impact of the BJP rule in the State.

According to the former Chief Minister and senior Congress(I) leader, Mr Virbhadra Singh, national issues have never played an important role in the elections in Himachal Pradesh. "Barring one or two instances, extraneous factors have never been a decisive factor in this State. Development is the basis of politics here," he said.

Development has always been the major issue in this impoverished State, the economy of which is dependant on the goodwill of the Centre. There has been little industrial progress and allocation of funds has been meagre. This time too, issues on development are back on the agenda of both the parties who will base their campaigns on claims of bringing about progress to the State.

While the Congress(I)'s main electoral plank will be a negative one, highlighting the lack of development during the BJP's regime here, the latter is expected to focus on the Centre's alleged discrimination towards the State.

The issues regarding the allegations of corruption against the Congress(I) at the Centre and the Ayodhya incident will not play any major role in the electoral campaign. Although the Congress(I) has been highlighting communalism in all the four erstwhile BJP-ruled States, the issue is unlikely to make an impact in Himachal Pradesh. A senior Congress(I) leader said that the Congress(I) campaign hinging on secularism would not have any effect in Himachal Pradesh. He observed that "here each village has a local deity. Why should they be bothered about what is happening to some mandir thousands of miles off? Our leaders are talking about making secularism a major electoral issue, but here we have to fight on ground realities. A State which sees itself as discriminated against as far as the allocation of funds is concerned, cannot really be bothered about the concerns of the Centre."

The BJP here has been highlighting its demand for the payment of royalty in hydel projects by the Centre to the State. According to the party, Himachal Pradesh is entitled to royalty worth nearly Rs 300 crores from the Centre, an amount which would enable the State to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

The BJP has accused successive Congress(I) Governments in the State of failing to raise this issue. The dismissal of the BJP Government "without any reason" and the considerable number of transfers and appointments during President's rule here will also figure prominently during the party's campaign.

Meanwhile, the Congress(I) is expected to emphasize on the poor performance of the BJP Government and its failure to bring any major development projects to the State. The Congress(I) will also focus on the controversial decisions taken by the BJP, including its policy on the support price for apple growers. Further, the inability of the BJP to fulfil its electoral promises, including to provide 100 per cent employment and its harsh action against Government employees in the State, are some of the issues which will be highlighted by the Congress(I).

"Whatever development has taken place in this State has been brought about by the Congress(I)," says Mr Virbhadra Singh. "The State of Himachal Pradesh was itself a creation of the Congress(I). The BJP has only taken several anti-people decisions during its tenure that have succeeded in alienating all sections of the populace."

* Election Topics, Trends in Himachal Pradesh Viewed

94AS0065D New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 25 Oct 93 p 3

[Article by Ajay Srivastava: "Image and Local Issues Emphasized in Himachal"]

[Text] Dharamsala, 24 October. The major election issues of the main political parties are not becoming the basis for votes in the far flung villages in Himachal Pradesh. The

caste, local problems, and the candidates' own images overshadow national problems. Be it the traditional slogans of the Congress (I) such as secularism, national unity and defense or BJP issues such as Ram's temple, the villagers are apathetic even though they are well aware of these issues. Yes, the BJP demand for 2 billion 400 million rupees royalty for electricity project is very effective because it is related to the dream of local development.

Sardar Gurdial Singh, vice president of Palera Panchayat [village council] in Kangra election district, said that the problems in the hills are different that those in the plains. Backwardness is comparatively more prevalent here. The people prefer to work on their own problems rather than being involved in such issues as secularism and building the temple. Rafi Mohammed, a tailor in Gahlian village, said, "It is possible that the BJP is opposed to building the mosque in Ayodhya, however, we are with it here because of drinking water and school facilities." It is important to know that this region is within the Changer Belt and is more backward than other areas.

Gahlian Panchayat's head Chunni Lal has endorsed the Congress (I) this time. However, he also says that the region should get the electricity royalty because this region has a right to it.

The Congress (I) campaign is gaining momentum against the BJP in Nurpur area. The Rajput-majority area of Basa Vazira is untouched by the election activities yet. Vir Singh, a young man, said that the BJP has promised to spend one billion rupees from the possible 2 billion 400 million rupees royalty on creating jobs. He said that this BJP propaganda was influencing the unemployed. Shyam Kumari, a housewife in this village, goes to the temple for worship each morning. However, she prefers to vote for the Congress (I) even though she likes the idea of rebuilding the temple in Ayodhya. She said that a Congress (I) candidate can become a minister if he wins and this would benefit the local people.

The people in Sulah, the election district of former Chief Minister Shanta Kumar, give more emphasis to the local problems. Sunita, a college graduate from Nunaun village, said people are thinking about voting on the basis of caste again. People in Sulah say that more efforts to improve the situation in this region were made because this is the chief minister's election district. The basis of vote will be employment, and not caste.

Simir Ram, a farmer in Palam Pur district does not even know what the word secular means. He said, "I will pick the candidate that I like." The Janata Dal slogans do hint about Mandal in Rait region of Shahpur district, however, the voters seem to be divided between the BJP and the Congress (I). Tirath Prasad from a Chowdhery group asked what is the use of keeping the Mandal issue alive? The Delhi government has already promised to do many things.

The BJP and Congress (I) slogans are spread in colors on the walls. In Dharamsala, the BJP has raised such slogans as "We do not need alms; we need rights and therefore Shanta's government to demand the royalty. Posters demanding "A self-supporting Himachal with a BJP government that encourages progress" are hung everywhere. The slogan about Ram's temple is seen very rarely.

Meanwhile, the Congress (I) is targeting Shanta Kumar in its campaign. It is using such slogans as "No cheap flour now; Shanta has made everyone Tata." In addition, slogans to incite the government employees against the BJP are also being raised. However, there is no talk of secularism, construction of the temple, and mosque in Ayodhya or controlling inflation anywhere.

The BJP has made corruption at high level as an issue at the national level. However, this issue is limited to the candidates image in Himachal Pradesh. Both parties are referring to the major issues in their meetings to charm the voters, however, the voters have picked only local issues to express their opinions. The Janata Dal and the BSP have not succeeded in raising the Mandal issue in this state.

BJP

* Influential Apply Lobby in Himachal Said Opposing BJP

94AS0067B Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 21 Oct 93 p 5

[Article by Bishakhade Sarkar: "Apply Lobby To Seal BJP's Fate"]

[Text] Shimla, Oct. 20—The apple lobby of Himachal Pradesh is warming up for next month's Assembly elections, as it has once again emerged as the deciding factor for every party.

The apple lobby does not seem satisfied with either the Congress(I) or the BJP. During the February 1990 elections, it turned its back on the Congress(I) as the Virbhadra Singh government had failed to market their produce. Instead it had allowed the stocks to rot for two successive seasons.

Besides, the Horticulture Produce Marketing Corporation, which finds selling outlets for the apples, had deferred payment of support prices because of a resource crunch.

All this had pushed the apple growers towards the BJP, which had promised to overhaul the Corporation and raise support prices.

But 33 months later, the apple lobby, spread over seven districts, is singing a different tune. This time it will not side with the BJP. The resentment of the BJP has grown over the last two years as the party failed to live up to its election promises.

The BJP government brought down the support price of the culled apple from Rs 2.75 to Rs 1.30 but failed to pacify the apple lobby, which argued that the price was still higher than the international price of 65 paise. The apple growers launched a massive agitation and some of them were killed in police firing. This marked a total break between the BJP and the apple lobby.

The BJP now describes apple growers as parasites eating into the state's coffers instead of augmenting it. "Apple

growers make about Rs 400 crores every year but they do not contribute to the government," complained a BJP supporter. "The lobby has even refused to pay a rupee for every crate going out of the state. That itself would have helped the state government to make Rs one crore in a year," he added.

Apple growers are among the richest in the state. An official of the information department said, the apple-growing area of Kothgarh, has the highest per capita income in the world. The former Congress(I) chief minister, Mr Virbhadra Singh, said, "With more villagers taking to apple-growing, they have indeed become an important and influential section of society."

Apple-growing also highlights the disparity between the old and new Himachal. Apples are grown only in the upper parts of the state, commonly referred to as the old Himachal. The lower belt is dotted with other fruit orchards. Most Congress(I) leaders have flourishing apple orchards and the BJP feels there is a nexus between them and apple growers. "Why else were subsidies granted to the apple lobby during the Congress(I) regime. Besides, support prices for mangoes, litchies, which are grown in the lower belt, were not fixed," a BJP leader said.

The CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist] leader, Mr Mohar Singh, cited the case of the kinu fruit to substantiate his party's claim. Although the support price of the kinu fruit was fixed by the Centre, Mr Shanta Kumar ordered the closure of all collection centres of kinu, he said.

The Congress(I) is cashing in on the rift between the BJP and the apple lobby. Mr Virbhadra Singh is peppering his speeches with pledges to bridge the gap between apple and other fruit growers. "Today, apple forms the bulk of the fruit produce. But soon other fruits will overtake the apple. Our effort will be to make Himachal Pradesh the fruit bowl of the country," he said.

Congress (I)

* Rivalry Said Hurting Congress (I) in Himachal

94AS0067G Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 21 Oct 93 p 5

[Article by Aunohita Mojumdar: "Virbhadra-Sukh Ram Rivalry Weakens Congress(I) in Himachal Pradesh"]

[Text] Shilma, Oct. 20—The Himachal Pradesh Congress(I) leaders have, to all apparent purposes, buried their differences with the rival camps of Mr Virbhadra Singh and Mr Sukh Ram declaring their intention to work unitedly for the victory of the party. However, behind this public display of bonhomie is a seething mass of trouble.

The rivalry between the two leaders which reached a head during the distribution of the party tickets has already dealt a severe blow to the chances of the party in the elections. It is likely to further undermine the party's position during the campaign.

Himachal Pradesh has witnessed a bitter feud over the distribution of tickets with Mr Virbhadra Singh and Mr Sukh Ram virtually camping at the doorstep of the Prime Minister's residence for the past several weeks with their followers.

Party insiders are of the view that the wrangling has left a number of weak candidates in the fray since seats have been distributed on the basis of the political clout of senior leaders rather than winning capabilities of the candidates.

The two senior leaders, in an attempt to assert their supremacy, have embarked on a ticket collection spree. They have been lobbying hard for their candidates even in areas where a candidate of the rival group has better prospects.

In an attempt to placate the two senior leaders the party High Command has also given in to these pressure tactics and has not given tickets to candidates who do not belong to either camp.

The Virbhadra camp has suffered most in the battle, whose greater influence with the State electorate has not ensured commensurate number of tickets. Despite reports that the larger share of tickets has been secured by him, the reality is that in several constituencies his candidates have been removed from their traditional strongholds and are "adjusted" in seats where they do not have a chance of winning. Mr Virbhadra Singh has reportedly made his displeasure known to the party High Command in no uncertain terms.

According to a worker of the Virbhadra camp, the Raja Saheb, as he is popularly known, has privately expressed the opinion that the Congress(I) has "gifted" a large number of seats to the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party].

The rivalry between the two camps is also likely to cost the Congress(I) dearly in the forthcoming campaign. With the party High Command unwilling to clarify the leadership issue and indicate who would be the Chief Minister in the advent of the party's victory, the rival factions are reluctant to work for the victory of their opponents within the party.

Preparing for the electoral campaign in his house here, soon after his return from Delhi, Mr Virbhadra Singh is cautious in his criticism. He says that his priority is to ensure the victory of the Congress(I) in the State and the issue of leadership is only secondary. However, he does not mince words while expressing his displeasure about the manner in which the tickets have been distributed or the fact that the party would have stood a better chance had elections been called in May when the credibility of the BJP was at its lowest ebb.

The several months of President's rule has proved to be an advantage for the BJP which has launched a campaign against the "Government misrule." It has also given the BJP time to raise the issues of economic dependency of the State. "We had no part to play in the decisions taken during President's rule," says Mr Virbhadra Singh. "But it is equated with a Congress(I) Government and we stand to lose from it. President's rule has been disastrous and has damaged the prospects of the party."

Regarding the distribution of tickets, Mr Virbhadra Singh is quite clear that "it could have been better managed. For the first time the senior leaders of the State had very little say in the ticket distribution. What has emerged is a different brew altogether."

The infighting in the Congress(I) has also dealt a blow to the image of the party in the State. Moreover, precious time has been lost with senior party leaders lobbying for their candidates in Delhi, time the BJP has used fruitfully to dispatch its leaders to the various constituencies.

Even now with the last date of the nominations over, the lobbying continues, because the rival leaders, unhappy over the ticket distribution, have told their supporters to file their nominations in constituencies where the official candidate is from the other camp in the hope that lobbying will help to change the minds of the party bosses.

• President's Rule By January Forecast in Mizoram

94AS0045F Cochin THE WEEK in English 5 Sep 93 pp 26-27

[Article by Seema Hussain]

[Text] Election bells are ringing in the hill state but the polls to the 40-member assembly is unlikely to be held before a brief spell of President's rule. It is not because Chief Minister Lalthanhawla's Congress government is for it or the law and order situation has slipped. Only that the powerful church does not want balloting before the Gospel centenary celebrations start.

Which means New Delhi will have to clamp Article 356 of the Constitution on or after January 24, when Lalthanhawla's term ends. "The church has requested us to defer the polls until after the centenary celebrations as it fears that campaigning could vitiate the peaceful atmosphere in the state," Lalthanhawla told THE WEEK.

The church wields considerable influence in the Christian-dominated state. And no political party, least of all the Congress which is seeking reelection, can afford to ignore the clergy's request.

"We shall soon decide on the matter and get in touch with the Election Commission and the Union home ministry," Lalthanhawla said.

The week-long Gospel centenary celebrations begin on January 11. To be held under the aegis of all the churches in Mizoram, it marks the 100 years of the advent of Christianity in this remote land-locked state, bordering Myanmar. The church, including the Presbyterian, Baptist, Catholic and the Salvation Army, is sparing no effort to make the occasion a success.

Though poll deferment is a certainty, political parties are going ahead with their electoral strategies. The Mizo National Front and the Mizoram Janata Dal have forged an alliance. In fact, the MNF, formerly headed by the charismatic rebel leader Laldenga, and the Janata Dal, led by former chief minister Brig. Sailo, had signed a 'pact' last September. But it was only in July 1993 that the two parties announced that they had formed a joint party coordination committee to fight the Congress.

But Lalthanhawla is unfazed: "It is a marriage of convenience. The coming together of a die-hard regional force like the MNF and the Janata Dal indicates that neither of them is confident of facing the electorate on its own." The MNF had won 14 seats in the last assembly polls while Sailo's People's Conference (before it became the Mizoram Janata Dal) had to be satisfied with one.

It is for the first time that two major political parties in the state have got together to oust the Congress from power. But their anti-Congress tirade projecting the party as a stooge of the Centre may not cut much ice for the simple reason that Lalthanhawla himself is a vocal critic of the Centre.

The chief minister had blasted the Centre in an English daily last year and accused it of treating the people of Mizoram as second-class citizens. In what is seen as a mark of protest, Lalthanhawla has not been attending the meetings of the Northeastern Council, the apex development agency for the region. At the party level, he had abstained from the Northeast Congress Coordination Committee meeting held at Dimapur, Nagaland, in June.

However, the newly-launched Reang Democratic Front (RDF) could well upset the calculations of all the other contenders. The BJP, apparently desperate to secure a toehold in Mizoram, has approached the party for a poll alliance. RDF claims to represent the minority Reang community, concentrated in Aizawl and Lunglei districts.

But the chief minister sneezed at the possibility of the RDF posing a threat. "It is not a force at all. Even if it manages to secure financial support from its new-found allies, it is not going to have an impact on my party," dismissed Lalthanhawla. But some of his partymen are not so sure.

• BJP Seen Impacting Northeast, Including Mizoram

94AS0068I New Delhi ORGANISER in English 17 Oct 93 p 5

[Text] After winning both the Lok Sabha seats from the Cachar area of Assam in May-June 1991 general elections, and bagging ten seats for the Assam State Assembly in the elections held soon thereafter, the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] has now set its sights on other States in the north-east.

The most significant advance in this respect has been in case of Mizoram, where in the forthcoming November elections, the BJP is likely to contest ten out of the forty seats. This encouraging development took place after two regional parties decided to merge their identities with the BJP.

On Monday, October 4, the Reang Democratic Party and the Chakma Joda (youth) Dal, formally merged with the BJP in New Delhi, after the BJP President Shri L.K. Advani in consultation with the Central Parliamentary Board (CPB) approved of it.

Earlier, the two parties had formally adopted resolutions authorising Shri Swaibunga Reang, President of the Reang Democratic Party and Shri Nilamani Chakma, President of the Chakma Joda Dal, to merge with the BJP. The presidents and office-bearers of the two parties had earlier met Shri Kushabhau Thakre General Secretary of the BJP in this connection.

At the meeting held in Guwahati on September 28 in which the merger resolutions were adopted, Prof Vishnukant Shastri, national Vice-President, Shri Kabindra Purakayastha MP and Shri Bansilal Soree, BJP Organising-in-charge of the north-east hill districts, were present and welcomed the decisions.

The BJP will contest ten seats from Mizoram on its own symbol and Prof Vishnukant Shastri has been appointed Observer for the State. He will be assisted by Shri Purakayastha and Shri Soree.

Meanwhile, the BJP President Shri L.K. Advani has appointed a 16-member North-East Co-ordination Council for the period 1993-95 with Dr Jogeshwar Mohanta as Chairman and Shri S. Madhumangal Singh and Shri Ramen Deka as Secretaries. This step shows the importance the Party is paying to its organisation in the hill areas of north-east India.

Other members include S/Shri M. Bharot Singh (Manipur), N.I. Zeliang (Nagaland), Moyna Singh Phillut (Meghalaya) and Prof Pura Tado (Arunachal Pradesh).

Other members of the Council are: S/Shri Chau Tan Monpoong (Arunachal Pradesh), Bimalendu Roy, advocate from Silchar (Assam), Chuba Ao (Nagaland), Asoso Yonou (Manipur), Ram Naresh Pande, H.A. Kharpuli and B.S. Chhetri (Meghalaya), G.L. Saraf and Bansilal Sonee (Guwahati).

The permanent invitees to the Council are Prof Vishnukant Shastri, Shri Kabindra Purakayastha, both Members of the Rajya Sabha and Shrimati Bijoya Chakraborty, ex-MP.

Meanwhile, Shri Advani has constituted a 15-member ad hoc committee for Nagaland with Shri N.C. Zeliang as its President and Dr N. Rhetso as General Secretary. Shri Chuba Ao is the Vice-President along with Shri K.C. Zeliang and Shri Doodh Singh is the Secretary.

Members of the Committee are: S/Shri Pukhato Sema (Dimapur), Asat Doungel (Ghaspani), N. David (Tening), K. Ada (Kohima Town), Snganglow Konyak (Wohching), P.K. Along (Tizit), Bendeng Aier (Mokokchung), Mans Bhattacharjee (Dimapur), Angad Singh (Dimapur) and Shrimati Lynda Newmai (Peren).

Interestingly, with regard to the Mizoram elections, the Congress Party had contested the polls in 1988 on the manifesto of setting up a Christian State. Against this, election petitions challenging 16 Congress MLAs [Member of Legislative Assembly] of the Assembly were filed in the Guwahati High Court for using religion for seeking votes. However, none of these cases have been disposed of till today and the Judge who was hearing them, has been transferred to the Bombay High Court.

* Mizoram Elections Said Capable of Producing Surprises

94AS0065C New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 21 Oct 93 p 2

[Article: "Mizoram Ready for Third Election in Seven Years"]

[Text] Guvahati, 20 October (JANSATTA). Mizoram is holding the third vidhan sabha election in seven years since becoming a state in February 1987. The specialty of this state surrounded by five mountains is that, unlike other regions, the mountains go from north to south.

The election will be held in this state on 30 November. The 392,488 voters here will vote in 785 polling stations for the 40-member vidhan sabha which will end its term in January 1994. The tradition indicates that the priests in the churches here will play an important role in the election. This is one of the three Christian-majority states in the northeast. If any conclusion can be drawn from past experiences, the ruling party should clear way for the opposition to takeover the government.

The first vidhan sabha election was held soon after the historical agreement between the Indian government and the Mizoram National Front (MNF). The MNF had established its government after winning 25 seats. However, this government under the charismatic leader Lal Denga did not last very long. The government fell because of the disagreement among the legislators of his own party.

In the second election, the Congress (I) won 23 seats under the leadership of Lalthanhavla. The remaining two seats were won by parties that had deserted the MNF. The original MNF had to be satisfied with only 14 seats. The Mizoram Janata Dal also won one seat. It had no relationship with V.P. Singh's Janata Dal.

In this election, Lalthanhavla, the chief minister and leader of the Congress (I), will try to grab wholesale votes of aborigines by inciting their feelings for the state. The Mizoram national Front does not have the ability to win the government because of Lal Denga's absence.

Lalthanhavla has become very popular by opposing his party's government at the Center. He had refused to meet with the prime minister and several other leaders by saying that the Center was neglecting his state. The chief minister had also refused to participate in the Northeastern Federation and Northeastern Congress meetings on the same basis.

The interesting aspect about the Mizoram elections is that the party in government has always lost to the opposition here. This has happened twice here. The situation is very different this time. The MNF does not have any major issue. At least, its leaders have not raised an issue yet.

The Congress (I), which opposes the BJP approach of playing the Hindu card n Hindi-speaking regions, is willing to play the Christian card here. The last time, Congress (I) had openly asked for votes in the name of Jesus Christ. One of the Congress (I) slogan during the 1989 elections was, "Christian Government!" In 1989, the Congress (I) had promised that if it wins the election, it will make arrangements for the Mizoram people to visit the Holy Land. We do not know, however, how many Mizoram residents travelled to the Holy Land later!

The Church issues a paper to all the parties before the election. This paper has instructions for the party candidates. For example, during the last election, the Church had appealed to the parties to select candidates that fear God and who obey orders of the Church.

* Lack of Enthusiasm Seen For Election in Mizoram

94AS0065A New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 22 Oct 93 p 2

[News Report: "No Enthusiasm For Election in Mizoram"]

[Text] Aizawl, 21 October. There is an atmosphere of uncertainty and distrust about the election to be held here on 30 November. The main political parties in the election arena are the Congress (I), Mizo National Front, and Mizoram Janata Dal. However, none of these parties have any momentum in their campaigns.

The Mizoram Janata Dal under the leadership of Brigadier Ti Selo has broken its one-year old relationship with the National Front after failing to agree with it on the distribution of seats. It had expressed the desire for an agreement with the Congress (I), however, the central office of the Janata Dal did not permit it.

The Congress (I) also had expressed interest in an election agreement with the Mizoram Janata Dal. The Mizoram Janata Dal has only one seat in the present vidhan sabha. There were talks at the vice president level between the Congress (I) and the Mizoram Janata Dal. Both leaders discussed such important issues as distribution of seats, mutual acceptance of leaders of both parties, and forming a joint government if they won. The central leadership of the Janata Dal canceled all these plans.

After the Mizoram Janata Dal working committee meeting on Tuesday, a political affairs committee was formed under the chairmanship of Brigadier Selo. The party sources revealed that this committee will recommend whether the party should run for election on its own or establish a relationship with the Mizo National Front.

Meanwhile, in the northeast region of Aizawl district the militant group, Hamar People's Convention, has announced its decision to run for election on three or four seats here. Dr. Dev Jairama, the president of this party, said that he will select only high character candidates that can help stop corruption in public life.

According to Bibi Chakma, president of the Chakma Caste Federation, the BJP will run for election in 10 to 15 seats. The political observers believe that the Chakma Federation and the Riyang Democratic Party has joined the BJP.

* Congress (I) Confident of Win in Mizoram

94AS0068G Calcutta THE STATESMAN in English 24 Oct 94 p 7

[Text] Bomdila, Oct. 22—The Mizoram Chief Minister, Mr Lalthanhawla, is confident that the Congress(I) will return to power in his State with a decisive majority.

Talking to THE STATESMAN recently, Mr Lalthanhawla said the Congress(I)'s talks with the Janata Dal for seat adjustment in Mizoram was aimed at marginalizing the appeal of regionalism by consolidating the political forces in the State representing secular democratic values. He stated that his party's response to the Janata Dal's overtures for an alliance did not indicate a lack of confidence in its own abilities.

Mr Lalthanhawla alleged that a nexus had developed between the Mizo National Front and the Bharatiya Janata Party. Mr Swaraj Kaushal (a former Governor of Mizoram and husband of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] spokesman, Mrs Sushma Swaraj, M.P.), had played an important role in this, he added.

Stating that the BJP was yet to build a base in his State, the Chief Minister said that it had drawn two small regional organizations, the Chakma Jatiya Parishad and the Reang Tribal Union, into its fold to contest the elections under its symbol or its sponsorship. The BJP has asked the MNF [Mizo National Front (Chakma rebel group)] not to field its candidates in these seats, Mr Lalthanhawla said.

The Chief Minister said he had no idea whether the MNF would accept this dictum of the BJP, as a tie-up with the BJP would eventually weaken its own stronghold. The BJP brand of Hindutva was not in the interest of the Mizos or the nation, he added.

He referred to the NECCC(I) [expansion not given] resolution to reiterate that the Congress(I)'s victory in Mizoram would be the North-east's vote for political stability in the context of threats faced by the region from subversive forces, within and outside the country.

* Attempts at Election Alliances in Mizoram Viewed

94AS0065B New Delhi JANSATTA in Hindi 25 Oct 93 p 2

[News Report: "MJD Trying for Alliance With Two Parties"]

[Text] Aizawl, 24 October. Various political parties are attempting to form alliances for the election to be held on 30 November in the small state of Mizoram in northeast India. This will be the third vidhan sabha election in Mizoram since it became a state in 1978.

The smallest party in the state, the Mizoram Janata Dal (MJD), has become very important now. Two major political parties, The Mizoram Congress (I) and the Mizo National Front, are trying very hard to from an alliance with it. The Congress (I) believes that if it succeeds in forming an alliance, it will be able to win the election. Even though, it has not succeeded in this effort yet.

After the failure of talks for alliance between the MJD and the Front, the Congress (I) had initiated talks this month for an agreement, and the MJD has expressed its willingness for the talks.

However, the wave of joy about the possibility of a coalition ebbed quickly. The central leadership of the Janata Dal pressured MJD to refuse any kind of cooperation with the Congress (I). The MJD party sources revealed that the Janata Dal leaders in Delhi warned the MJD it will be expelled if it forms any kind of alliance with the Congress (I) in the state. These instructions were confirmed in the 18 October meeting of the working committee. Thangliana, the vice president of Maharashtra Congress Committee, was informed about it.

In addition, no agreement was reached in the talks about alliance over seats between the MJD leaders and the Congress representative group led by Chief Minister Lalthanhavla. The talks were dropped when the MJD leaders demanded cooperation on all the seats, formation of a

joint front government after the election, and appointment of their leader Brigadier Ti Selo as chief minister for two and a half years.

According to our sources, the Congress (I) found the MJD requirements very difficult. At the end of their talks, the Congress (I) had offered 12 seats. After this failure of talks, a three-sided contest among these parties is expected. Some independent candidates will also show up in a few places.

In the last election held in January 1989, the Congress (I) had won 23 seats and its cooperating party the Mizoram National Front (D) had won two seats. The Mizo National Front won 14 seas and the MJD one seat. The Congress (I) still has good prospects even after the failure to form a coalition with the MJD. If the opposition parties run for elections alone, they will not be able to improve much.

The election preparations in the state are coming along fine. The Election Commission has set 6 November for filing nomination forms in its announcement. The work to review the nomination forms will be finished by 8 November. A total of 785 polling stations will be established for the 392,488 voters in the state. In the first vidhan sabha election held in the state in February 1987, MNF had formed the government with 25 seats.

*** Janata Dal Factions Merge in Karnataka, Trend Seen**

93AS1033A Calcutta SUNDAY in English 10 Jul 93 pp 78-79

[Article by Gauri Lankesh: "Thinking Alike"]

[Text] Even as leaders of the various factions of the Janata Dal [JD] are trying to cobble together a united front at the national level, the party and the Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP) merged in Karnataka. The merger is expected to serve as a catalyst for unity at the national level.

Dal leader Ramakrishna Hegde told SUNDAY, "This will undoubtedly create a better atmosphere for a united front in the country and bring pressure on the various leaders to unite."

Nationally, all the Dal leaders seem to feel that a merger of the factions would be a good idea. However, nothing much has come of it. And an idea it still remains. Chandra Shekhar is busy trying to carve out a niche for himself since his SJP practically exists in name only. Ajit Singh is sitting on the fence and Mulayam Singh just doesn't trust V.P. Singh.

Until a couple of years ago, the situation was no different in Karnataka. Hegde, the Dal leader in the state, has had a long rivalry with the SJP's H.D. Deve Gowda which goes back to the days of Hegde's chief ministership.

The enmity was reflected in the election results. The Dal, which had bagged 140 Assembly seats in the 1985 polls was forced to eat humble pie in 1989 as it came away with 24 seats, barely enough to make it the leading Opposition party. Gowda's Janata Party—as it was called then—fared miserably and was lucky to emerge with three seats to its name.

As Hegde and Gowda licked their wounds, they realised that their rivalry had cost them credibility and almost brought their political careers to a grinding halt. Hegde's stock further went down as he had gotten embroiled in scandals related to dubious land deals and telephone tapping. And Gowda had become a marginal force portrayed as a man with influence only over the dominant Vokkaliga community.

There were some political lessons as well. The election results showed that the two parties had split the Opposition vote in many constituencies. The Congress reaped the benefits. It was then that Hegde and Gowda decided to bury the hatchet. For the 1991 elections, they hammered out an understanding and divided the constituencies between themselves so the vote wouldn't be split.

That wasn't good enough. The antics of Devi Lal, V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar in the national arena had a telling effect. Between them, Gowda and Hegde carried only one of the 28 seats at stake, which was won by the former.

The situation called for immediate action. So Hegde decided to push for a formal merger with the SJP. There was fierce opposition on both sides. Gowda's followers—who had worked against Hegde in the past—feared being sidelined. On Hegde's side, Dal president S.R. Bommai and state unit president J.H. Patel led the anti-merger brigade.

And Deve Gowda himself was reluctant.

The SJP leader feared that a merger would only allow the Dal to take over his support base and he had everything to lose. Gowda was also worried that he would have no say whatsoever in the reunited Dal. Hegde, however, was made of sterner stuff. He convinced everyone, including Gowda, that a merger was the only way to go.

In its new avatar, the united Dal will have Gowda as party president of the state unit. He will take over on 9 August at the state-level convention which will formally endorse the merger.

Announcing the merger, Hegde said, "Both the SJP and the Dal have suffered because of our fights. We have learnt our lesson and hereafter we will work together in the interests of the state."

There is more to it than that. Simple political survival. As J.H. Patel put it, "If we had not merged, we would have become politically irrelevant. The merger was inevitable."

A mere merger, however, won't make things happen as if by magic. Hegde, Gowda and their partymen will first have to gain some credibility with the voters. Although they have promised not to split again, Patel said, "We have to explain to the people and beg for their forgiveness. We have to do a lot of hard work to become acceptable and to regain lost ground."

The choice of Gowda as party president makes sense. At least in Karnataka, there is no one to match up to him. Bommai is reluctant to give up his post at the national level to come back and dabble in state politics. Patel simply isn't up to the task and the charismatic Hegde has lost much of his earlier sheen.

More importantly, Gowda is one of the few leaders left who isn't tainted by scandals. And that's saying a lot in a state like Karnataka.

The first real test for the reunited party will come with the panchayat elections which are expected to be held soon. With that in mind, Gowda and Hegde are expected to criss-cross the state to garner support and credibility. Says Hegde, "By no means can I say that our task is accomplished with the merger. It will take some more time and a lot of hard work."

But will it be enough to see them come to power?

*** Kerala: Congress Faces Tough Times**

94AS0002A Bombay TIMES OF INDIA in English 15 Sep 93 p 7

[Article by P.K. Surendran]

[Text] Thiruvananthapuram, 14 Sep—The election over, the game of passing the buck is on. The loss of the Ottapalam parliamentary seat by a massive margin has generated the cacophony of accusations among the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) government of

Kerala. The Indian Union Muslim League has convened its state-level meeting on September 20 to assess the result; the Congress party will meet on September 22. Sources, however,point out that despite the war of attrition between the Muslim League and the Congress, there is no immediate threat to the coalition ministry. Bound by mutual interest of continuing in power, the two will eventually find plausible excuses to keep together. Irked by the chief minister, Mr K. Karunakaran's reaction that the Ottapalam seat was lost because Muslims voted against the Congress on the Babri mosque issue, the League legislative party leader and industries minister, Mr P.K. Kunhalikutty, today said the chief minister must explain how other assembly segments where Muslim voters were insignificant had given considerable lead to the Left Front candidate, Mr S. Sivaraman. While Pattambi, where Mr K.R. Narayanan was trailing last time, had given creditable lead to the UDF candidate, Mr K.K. Balakrishnan, Mr Kutty wanted to know why the Kunnamkulam constituency which had a sizable population of Christians had given a large margin to the Left Front candidate. The industry minister claimed that Muslim voters had not voted en bloc against the Congress. Whatever Muslim votes the UDF got in Ottapalam was due to the Muslim League, he claimed. The minister said the reasons for the record win of the LDF with 132,000 votes must be analyzed dispassionately. According to another senior legislator of the League, Ottapalam was lost to the UDF solely because of the Congress. It was due to the disharmony within the Congress that even the election slips had not reached voters on the eve of the election. The Kerala Congress (M), another important partner of the UDF, has so far kept silent over the election result and its failure to ensure maximum Christian votes for the UDF. But the real challenge for the Congress in the state now is the likely flare-up of dissidence, euphemistically called reformist group, led by the K.P.C.C. Vice-President, Mr G. Kartikeyan, and the former speaker, Mr V.M. Sudheeran. The Ottapalam by-election was the test case for the Congress unity between the warring factions of the chief minister and the union minister, Mr A.K. Antony. A win would have proved the unity effective while the loss, a symbol of artificial unity effected on the surface by two leaders for their vested interest. The abortive bid to bring the reformists back to the ruling coteries' side, made after the election, pointed to the friction in store. Mr Kartikeyan had reportedly refused to discuss the contentious issues with Mr K. Muraleedharan, the parliamentarian son of Karunakaran. "He (Mr Muraleedharan) himself is the issue; how to discuss it with him" asked one of the six legislators backing the reformists. While it will have no great challenge from the Left Democratic Front led by the CPM, the Congress will have to tackle its coalition partners and intra-party dissidence in the days to come. Political observers believe the Congress, desperate as it is from the second successive defeat to the party candidate (the assembly election held early this year it had lost), may resort to fresh and more brazen ways to appease Muslims before next elections. The Muslim League has alaready put up a demand to include all Muslim population in the state in the Mandal Commission, instead of a portion of them now, eligible for quota under the Mandal.

* Bombay: Six Municipal Wards By-Elections Announced

94AS0002J Bombay TIMES OF INDIA in English 15 Sep 93 p 3

[Text] Bombay, 14 Sep—By-elections in six municipal wards in the city may be held by December 7 and the Bombay municipal corporation had specified August 1 for preparing the draft electoral rolls. The six wards are: 27, Bane Compound Golf Club; 52, Naigaum B. D.D. Chawls; 60, Pratiksha Nagar, Sion; 84, Jasmine Mill-Rajarshi Shahu Nagra; 200, Chirag Nagar; and 212, Tembe Pada. In ward number 16, which covers the Durgadevi Udyan-gol Deval, owing to an election petition pending in the small causes courts, no by-elections can be held.

* Karnataka: Festival May Delay Local Polls

94AS0002G Bombay TIMES OF INDIA in English 18 Sep 93 p 7

[Text] Bangalore, 17 Sep—The chairman of the Mahamastakabhisheka celebrations committee, Mr Ashok Kumar Jain, said that he proposed to request the Karnataka Chief Minister, Mr M. Veerappa Moily, for a change in the date of the gram panchayat polls scheduled for December 19 as the Mahamastakabhisheka of Bhagawan Shri Bahubali at Shravanabelagola in Karnataka was also slated to be held on the same day. He told reporters here yesterday that the date of the Mahamastakabhisheka, held once in 12 years, was fixed well in advance on an auspicious day as per the Jain traditions. He stated it was too late to change the date at this stage. The chairman agreed that both the ceremony and the polls could not be held on the same date as it would pose security problems in view of the fact that several VIPs, including the Prime Minister, Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao, were scheduled to visit Shravanabelagola. He indicated that the Prime Minister would visit Shravanabelagola on December 18 to witness the celebrations. Mr Jain said more than a million people were expected to visit Shravanabelagola during the celebrations which would be inaugurated on December 2 and would culminate in the main function on December 19. He stated that 200,000 people were expected to witness the main function. The chairman said arrangements were being made to accommodate over 50,000 people at Shravanabelagola on the day of the main function. He said work was in progress to supply piped water and other civic amenities there. He thanked the chief minister and the Karnataka government for providing a permanent infrastructure at Shravanabelagola. Mr Jain said regional centers had been set up at Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Indore and Bangalore. The Bangalore committee was headed by Mr A.R. Nirmal Kumar. The Bangalore center had been asked to arrange special KSRTC buses during December to ply between the city and Shravanabelagola. Special trains would be arranged between Bangalore and other major cities in the country.

*** BJP Influence in South Said Growing, Alliances Unneeded**

94AS0046J Madras THE HINDU in English 3 Oct 93 p 10

[Text] New Delhi, Oct 3—Pleasantly surprised at the response the Bharatiya Janata Party has been getting from south of the Vindhyas—this was apparent even during the recent "janadesh yatra" led by party resident, Mr. L.K. Advani—the party seems to have virtually given up the idea of wooing the smaller regional parties.

During the last six months the leadership has had detailed discussions with its units in the four southern states, and it was clear that the party units in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh especially were less than keen on tying themselves to the apron strings of other parties. "We have decided not only to go it alone at the national level, whenever the next general elections are held, but also at the state level," Mr. Venkaiah Naidu, party in-charge of the southern states, told THE HINDU.

He admitted that about a year ago the party's strategy was to woo the regional parties for the state-level elections and go it alone at the national level. "Yes, there has been some change in the strategy," Mr. Naidu said. He felt that the fast growing response to the party in the southern states and the feeling that in the long run any normal ties with other parties could be counter productive had led to a change in the strategy.

Last year there had been intense speculation—and not without reason—that the BJP was going all out to woo Ms. J. Jayalalitha, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, and Mr. N.T. Rama Rao, the Telugu Desam chief, with a view to arriving at a broad understanding with the AIADMK and the TD. The breaking up of the alliance between the AIADMK and the Congress(I) fuelled this speculation, but it became clear that Ms Jayalalitha was not about to run into the arms of the BJP.

'Partners' if necessary: Our view is that instead of trying for alliances with the AIADMK or the TD, the BJP should simply avoid doing or saying anything that could lead to misunderstanding. We want to steer clear of anything controversial, we want to avoid annoying NTR and Ms Jayalalitha, Mr. Naidu said. And he does not hide the fact that in the event of the BJP needing "partners" if it were to fall short of a clear majority at the Centre, whenever elections are held, it will look to these regional parties.

Mr. Naidu all but admitted that even in order to have some meaningful understanding or even electoral adjustments with the regional parties it was necessary for the BJP to build its own base. "After all, what would a party like AIADMK stand to gain through an adjustment with the BJP as things stand now?" he asked. Any adjustment must be seen by both the parties concerned to be mutually, advantageous. With the BJP's growing strength as a national alternative, the one "bait" that the party may be in a position to offer would be a share in power at the Centre.

For that reason, even for its overall national strategy and for its strategy in the southern states, the ensuing elections in the four states in the North will be crucial. It will be important for the party to demonstrate effectively that it indeed is a government in waiting. Meanwhile, it has been steadily creating its own base in each of the four states in the south.

In Karnataka the BJP has grown by leaps and bounds and the state leadership is very hopeful of being in a position to form a state government in the not too distant future. The squabbling in the Congress(I) has only helped strengthen the BJP. In Andhra the party assessment is that while the Congress(I) is in a disarray, in spite of the fact that it is the Prime Minister's home state. NTR's Desam has not been able to come anywhere near the popularity it enjoyed during the early eighties. The BJP is hoping to slip into the political vacuum, as it were.

Inroads in TN: Mr. Naidu claimed that even in Tamil Nadu, where Ms Jayalalitha reigns supreme, by the time State Assembly elections are held the BJP would be in a position to take a few assembly seats around Kanyakumari. "We have ourselves been surprised at the inroads we have been able to make. We could get as many as five seats in Tamil Nadu Assembly the next time around, and certainly we hope to open our account," Mr. Naidu added.

Kerala is a different story. In the ding-dong political battle between the left and the centre, it is the Indian Union Muslim League of Kerala that has played an important role, helping the pendulum to swing this way or that. The BJP has been watching with great interest the large rallies that its top leaders have been able to address, and the work at the grassroots level has been going on. In Kerala the RSS presence goes back several decades, and it is on this that the BJP has been building its political hopes. The leadership has made much of the Friday school holiday ordered by the Karunakaran Government in State run schools dominated by Muslim students, the state has recently seen clashes between the RSS and the Islamic Sevak Sangh, and generally the effort of the Sangh Parivar has been to sharpen the ethnic divide along religious lines.

Mr. Naidu admitted that during the Bangalore session of the BJP national executive this summer units from the southern states had had long discussions with the leadership and had virtually demanded that the party make an effort to talk about issues other than Ayodhya. It was felt that Ayodhya would not sell in the South in the manner in which it has in the North. Here again, he admitted, that the party units were themselves surprised, for Ram and Ayodhya has struck a chord even in the South.

The BJP is certainly hoping that in the next few years the cracks in the Congress(I) southern bastion which are beginning to show will widen into chasms that the ruling party will find difficult to fill. The popular regional parties are confined to specific states. The BJP hopes to get an unexpectedly favourable response from here as a party offering an alternative at the Centre.